

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 1, Scene 1

Enter **THESEUS**, **HIPPOLYTA**, and **PHILOSTRATE**,
with others

THESEUS and **HIPPOLYTA** enter
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.

THESEUS

Our wedding day is almost here, my beautiful Hippolyta. We’ll be getting married in four days, on the day of the new moon. But it seems to me that the days are passing too slowly—the old moon is taking too long to fade away! That old, slow moon is keeping me from getting what I want, just like an old widow makes her stepson wait to get 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.

HIPPOLYTA

No, you’ll see, four days will quickly turn into four nights. And since we dream at night, time passes quickly then. Finally the new moon, curved like a silver bow in the sky, will look down on 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.

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate, get the young people of Athens ready to celebrate and have a good time. Sadness is only appropriate for funerals. We don’t want it at our festivities.

Exit **PHILOSTRATE**

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 wooed you with violence, using my sword, and got you to fall in love with me by injuring you. But I’ll marry you under different circumstances—with extravagant festivals, public festivities, and celebration.

Enter **EGEUS** and his daughter **HERMIA**,
and **LYSANDER** and **DEMETRIUS**

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

EGEUS

20 Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke.

EGEUS

Long live Theseus, our famous and respected duke!

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 2

THESEUS

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

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus. What’s new 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,

EGEUS

I’m here, full of anger, to complain about my daughter Hermia.—Step forward, Demetrius.—My lord, this man, Demetrius, has my permission to marry her.—Step forward, Lysander.—But this other man, Lysander, has cast a magic spell over my child’s heart.—You, you, Lysander, you’ve given her poems, and exchanged tokens of love with my daughter. You’ve pretended to be in love with her, singing fake love songs softly at her window by moonlight, and you’ve captured her imagination by giving her locks of your hair, rings, toys, trinkets, knickknacks, little presents, flowers,

Original Text

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.

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 3**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 mew’d,
 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

Modern Text

and candies—things that can really influence an impressionable young person. You’ve connived to steal my daughter’s heart, making her stubborn and harsh instead of obedient (like she should be).—And, my gracious duke, if she won’t agree to marry Demetrius right now, I ask you to let me exercise the right that all fathers have in Athens. Since she belongs to me, I can do what I want with her—as the law says: I can either make her marry Demetrius—or have her killed.

THESEUS

What do you have to say for yourself, Hermia? Think carefully, pretty girl. You should think of your father as a god, since he’s the one who gave you your beauty. To him, you’re like a figure that he’s sculpted out of wax, and he has the power to keep that figure intact or to disfigure it. Demetrius is an admirable man.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

You’re right, Lysander’s admirable too. But since your father doesn’t want him to marry you, you have to consider Demetrius to be the better man.

HERMIA

I wish my father could see them with my eyes.

THESEUS

No, you must see them as your father sees them.

HERMIA

Your grace, please forgive me. I don’t know what makes me think I can say this, and I don’t know if speaking my mind to such a powerful and noble person as yourself will damage my reputation for modesty. But please, tell me the worst thing that could happen to me if I refuse to marry Demetrius.

THESEUS

You’ll either be executed or you’ll never see another man again. So think carefully about what you want, beautiful Hermia. Consider how young you are, and question your feelings. Then decide whether you could stand to be a nun, wearing a priestess’s habit and caged up in a cloister forever, living your entire life without a husband or children, weakly chanting hymns to the cold and virginal goddess of the moon. People who can restrain their passions and stay virgins forever are holy. But although a virgin priestess might be rewarded in heaven, a married woman is happier

Original Text

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

Modern Text

on Earth. A married woman is like a rose who is
picked and made into a beautiful perfume, while a
priestess just withers away on the stem.

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 4**HERMIA**

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
80 Ere I will 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.

HERMIA

I’d rather wither away than give up my virginity to
someone I don’t love.

THESEUS

Take some time to think about this. By the time
of the next new moon—the day when Hippolyta
and I will be married—be ready either to be
executed for disobeying your father, to marry
Demetrius as your father wishes, or to take a
vow to spend the rest of your life as a virgin
priestess of the moon goddess.

DEMETRIUS

Please give in, sweet Hermia.—And Lysander,
stop acting like she’s yours. I’ve got more of a
right to her than you do.

LYSANDER

Her father loves you, Demetrius. So why don’t
you marry him and let me have Hermia?

EGEUS

It’s true, rude Lysander, I do love him. That’s why
I’m giving him my daughter. She’s mine, and I’m
giving her to Demetrius.

LYSANDER

(to THESEUS) My lord, I’m just as noble and rich
as he is. I love Hermia more than he does. My
prospects are as good as his, if not better. And
beautiful Hermia loves me—which is more
important than all those other things I’m bragging
about. Why shouldn’t I be able to marry her?
Demetrius—and I’ll say this to his face—courted
Nedar’s daughter, Helena, and made her fall in
love with him. That sweet lady, Helena, loves
devoutly. She adores this horrible and unfaithful
man.

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 5**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.

THESEUS

I have to admit I’ve heard something about that,
and meant to ask Demetrius about it, but I was
too busy with personal matters and it slipped my
mind.—Anyway, Demetrius and Egeus, both of
you, come with me. I want to say a few things to

Original Text

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.

Exeunt. Manent 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—

Modern Text

you in private.—As for you, beautiful Hermia, get ready to do what your father wants, because otherwise the law says that you must die or become a nun, and there’s nothing I can do about that.—Come with me, Hippolyta. How are you, my love?—Demetrius and Egeus, come with us. I want you to do some things for our wedding, and I also want to discuss something that concerns you both.

EGEUS

We’re following you not only because it is our duty, but also because we want to.

They all exit except LYSANDER and HERMIA.

LYSANDER

What’s going on, my love? Why are you so pale?
 Why have your rosy cheeks faded so quickly?

HERMIA

Probably because my cheeks’ roses needed rain, which I could easily give them with all the tears in my eyes.

LYSANDER

Oh, honey! Listen, in books they say that true love always faces obstacles. Either the lovers have different social standings—

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 6**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.

HERMIA

Oh, what an obstacle that would be! Imagine being too high on the social ladder, and falling in love with someone beneath you.

LYSANDER

Or else they were very different ages—

HERMIA

How awful! Being too old to marry someone young.

LYSANDER

Or else their guardians and advisors said no—

HERMIA

What hell, to have your love life determined by someone else!

LYSANDER

Or, even if the lovers are a good match, their love might be ruined by war, death, or sickness, so that the affair only lasts an instant. Their time together might be as fleeting as a shadow or as short as a dream, lasting only as long as it takes a lightning bolt to flash across the sky. Before you can say “look,” it’s gone. That’s how intense things like love are quickly destroyed.

Original Text

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—

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 7

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.

Enter HELENA

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
190 melody.

Modern Text**HERMIA**

If true lovers are always thwarted, then it must be a rule of fate. So let’s try to be patient as we deal with our problem. It’s as normal a part of love as dreams, sighs, wishes, and tears.

LYSANDER

That’s the right attitude. So, listen, Hermia. I have an aunt who is a widow, who’s very rich and doesn’t have any children. She lives about twenty miles from Athens, and she thinks of me as a son. I could marry you there, gentle Hermia, where the strict laws of Athens can’t touch us. So here’s the plan. If you love me, sneak out of your father’s house tomorrow night and meet me in the forest a few miles outside of town.

You remember the place—I met you there once with Helena to celebrate May Day.—I’ll wait for you there.

HERMIA

Oh, Lysander, I swear I’ll be there tomorrow. I swear by Cupid’s strongest bow and his best gold-tipped arrow, by the Goddess of Love’s innocent doves, by everything that ties lovers together, by the bonfire where Queen Dido burned herself to death when her lover Aeneas jilted her, and by all the promises that men have broken (and men have broken more promises than women have ever made). I give you my word, I will meet you at that spot tomorrow.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA enters.

HERMIA

Hello, beautiful Helena! Where are you going?

HELENA

Did you just call me “beautiful”? Take it back. You’re the beautiful one as far as Demetrius is concerned. Oh, you’re so lucky! Your eyes are like stars, and your voice is more musical than a lark’s song is to a shepherd in the springtime. Sickness is contagious—I wish beauty were contagious too! I would catch your good looks before I left. My ear would be infected by your voice, my eye by your eye, and my tongue would come down with a bad case of your melodious

Original Text

Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 8

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,

Modern Text

speech. If the world were mine, I'd give it all up—
everything except Demetrius—to be you.

Oh, teach me how you look the way you do, and
which tricks you used to make Demetrius fall in
love with you.

HERMIA

I frown at him, but he still loves me.

HELENA

Oh, if only my smiles could inspire love as
effectively as your frowns!

HERMIA

I curse him, but he loves me.

HELENA

If only my prayers could inspire that kind of
affection!

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

It's not my fault he acts like that, Helena.

HELENA

That's true, it's your beauty's fault. I wish I had a
fault like that!

HERMIA

Don't worry. He won't see my face ever again.

Lysander and I are running away from here.

Before I saw Lysander, Athens seemed like
paradise to me. But Lysander's so attractive that
he's turned heaven into hell!

LYSANDER

Helena, we'll tell you about our secret plan.

Tomorrow night, when the moon shines on the
water and decorates the grass with tiny beads of
pearly light (the time of night that always hides
runaway lovers), we plan to sneak out of Athens.

HERMIA

(to HELENA) In the woods where you and I used
to lounge around on the pale primroses, telling
each other sweet secrets—that's where
Lysander and I will meet.

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 9

There my Lysander and myself shall meet.
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes

From then on we'll turn our backs on Athens.
We'll look for new friends and keep the company

Original Text

To seek new friends and stranger companies.
 220 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.

Exit HERMIA

Helena, adieu.

225 As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

Exit LYSANDER

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.

Modern Text

of strangers. Goodbye, old friend. Pray for us,
 and I hope you win over Demetrius!—Keep your
 promise, Lysander. We need to stay away from
 each other until midnight tomorrow.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

HERMIA exits.

Goodbye, Helena. I hope Demetrius comes to
 love you as much as you love him!

LYSANDER exits.

HELENA

It's amazing how much happier some people are
 than others! People throughout Athens think I'm
 as beautiful as Hermia. But so what? Demetrius
 doesn't think so, and that's all that matters. He
 refuses to admit what everyone else knows. But
 even though he's making a mistake by obsessing
 over Hermia so much, I'm also making a mistake,
 since I obsess over him. Love can make
 worthless things beautiful. When we're in love,
 we don't see with our eyes but with our minds.
 That's why paintings of Cupid, the god of love,
 always show him as blind. And love doesn't have
 good judgment either—Cupid, has wings and no
 eyes, so he's bound to be reckless and hasty.
 That's why they say love is a child. because it
 makes such bad choices. Just as boys like to
 play games by telling lies, Cupid breaks his
 promises all the time. Before Demetrius ever saw
 Hermia, he showered me with promises and
 swore he'd be mine forever.

Act 1, Scene 1, Page 10

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.

Exit

But when he got all hot and bothered over
 Hermia, his promises melted away. I'll go tell
 Demetrius that Hermia is running away tomorrow
 night. He'll run after her. If he's grateful to me for
 this information, it'll be worth my pain in helping
 him pursue my rival Hermia. At least I'll get to
 see him when he goes, and then again when he
 comes back.

HERMIA exits.

Act 1, Scene 2

*Enter QUINCE the carpenter, and SNUG the joiner,
 and BOTTOM the weaver, and FLUTE the bellows-
 mender, and SNOUT the tinker,
 and STARVELING the tailor*

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

*QUINCE, the carpenter, enters with SNUG, the
 cabinetmaker; BOTTOM, the weaver; FLUTE, the
 bellows-repairman; SNOUT, the handyman;
 and STARVELING, the tailor.*

QUINCE

Is everyone here?

Original Text

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.

Modern Text

BOTTOM

You should call their names *generally*, one person at a time, in the order in which their names appear on this piece of paper.

QUINCE

This is a list of the names of all the men in Athens who are good enough to act in the play we’re going to perform for the duke and duchess on their wedding night.

BOTTOM

First, Peter Quince, tell us what the play is about, then read the names of the actors, and then shut up.

QUINCE

All right. Our play is called *A Very Tragic Comedy About the Horrible Deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

BOTTOM

Let me tell you, it’s a great piece of work, and very—funny.—Now, Peter Quince, call the names of the actors on the list. Men, gather around him.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Here. Tell me which part I’m going to play, then go on.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, have been cast as Pyramus.

Act 1, Scene 2, Page 2

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 Eracles 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 Eracles’ vein, a tyrant’s vein. A lover is more

BOTTOM

What’s Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover who kills himself very nobly for love.

BOTTOM

I’ll have to cry to make my performance believable. And as soon as I start crying, oh boy, the audience had better watch out, because they’ll start crying too. I’ll make tears pour out of their eyes like rainstorms. I’ll moan very believably.—Name the other actors.—But I’m really in the mood to play a tyrant. I could do a great job with Hercules, or any other part that requires ranting and raving. I would rant and rave really well. Like this, listen.

*The raging rocks
nd shivering shocks
Will break the locks
Of prison gates.
And the sun-god’s car
Will shine from far*

Original Text

condoling.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?

FLUTE

15 Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

Act 1, Scene 2, Page 3**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.

Modern Text

*Away, and make and mar
Foolish fate.*

Oh, that was truly inspired!—Now tell us who the other actors are.—By the way, my performance just now was in the style of Hercules, the tyrant style. A lover would have to be weepier, of course.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-repairman?

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you’ll be playing the role of Thisbe.

FLUTE

Who’s Thisbe? A knight on a quest?

QUINCE

Thisbe is the lady Pyramus is in love with.

FLUTE

No, come on, don’t make me play a woman. I’m growing a beard.

QUINCE

That doesn’t matter. You’ll wear a mask, and you can make your voice as high as you want to.

BOTTOM

In that case, if I can wear a mask, let me play Thisbe too! I’ll be Pyramus first: “Thisne, Thisne!”—And then in falsetto: “Ah, Pyramus, my dear lover! I’m your dear Thisbe, your dear lady!”

QUINCE

No, no. Bottom, you’re Pyramus.—And Flute, you’re Thisbe.

BOTTOM

All right. Go on.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, you’re going to play Thisbe’s mother.—Tom Snout, the handyman.

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

You’ll be Pyramus’s father—I’ll play Thisbe’s father myself—Snug, the cabinetmaker, you’ll play the part of the lion.—So that’s everyone. I hope this play is well cast now.

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 1, Scene 2, Page 4

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.

SNUG

Do you have the lion’s part written down? If you do, please give it to me, because I need to start learning the lines. It takes me a long time to learn things.

QUINCE

You can improvise the whole thing. It’s just roaring.

BOTTOM

Let me play the lion too. I’ll roar so well that it’ll be an inspiration to 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 ferociously, you’ll scare the duchess and the other ladies and make them scream. And that would get us all executed.

ALL

Yeah, that would get every single one of us executed.

BOTTOM

Well, my friends, you’ve got to admit that if you scare the living daylights out of the ladies, they’d have no choice but to execute us. But I’ll soften my voice—you know, [aggravate](#) it, so to speak—so that I’ll roar as gently as a baby dove. I’ll roar like a sweet, peaceful nightingale.

QUINCE

You can’t play any part except Pyramus. Because Pyramus is a good-looking man, the most handsome man that you could find on a summer’s day, a lovely gentlemanly man. So you’re the only one who could play Pyramus.

BOTTOM

Well then, I’ll do it. What kind of beard should I wear for the part?

QUINCE

Whatever kind you want, I guess.

Act 1, Scene 2, Page 5

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

BOTTOM

I’ll play the part wearing either a straw-colored beard, or a sandy beard, or a red beard, or one of those bright yellow beards that’s the color of a French coin.

QUINCE

Some French people don’t have beards at all, because syphilis has made all their hair fall out, so you might have to play the part clean-shaven.—But gentlemen, here are your scripts,

Original Text

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.

Exeunt

Modern Text

and I beg you to please learn them by tomorrow night. Meet me in the duke’s forest a mile outside of town. It’s best to rehearse there, because if we do it here in the city, we’ll be bothered by crowds of people and everyone will know the plot of our play. Meanwhile, I’ll make a list of props that we’ll need for the play. Now make sure you show up, all of you. Don’t leave me in the lurch.

BOTTOM

We’ll be there, and there we’ll rehearse courageously and wonderfully, truly obscenely. Work hard, know your lines. Goodbye.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Got it? Be there, or don’t show your face again.

They all exit.

Act 2, Scene 1

Enter a FAIRY at one side and ROBIN (ROBIN GOODFELLOW) at another

ROBIN

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire.
I do wander everywhere
Swifter than the moon’s sphere.
And I serve the fairy queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be.
In their gold coats spots you see.
Those be rubies, fairy favors.
In those freckles live their savors.
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits. I’ll be gone.

Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The king doth keep his revels here tonight.

5 Take heed the queen come not within his sight.

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath
Because that she, as her attendant hath
A lovely boy stolen from an Indian king.
She never had so sweet a changeling.

10 And jealous Oberon would have the child
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.

A FAIRY and ROBIN GOODFELLOW (a “puck” or mischievous spirit) meet onstage.

ROBIN

Hello, spirit! Where are you going?

FAIRY

I go over hills and valleys, through bushes and thorns, over parks and fenced-in spaces, through water and fire. I wander everywhere faster than the moon revolves around the Earth. I work for Titania, the Fairy Queen, and organize fairy dances for her in the grass. The cowslip flowers are her bodyguards. You’ll see that their petals have spots on them—those are rubies, fairy gifts. Their sweet smells come from those little freckles. Now I have to go find some dewdrops and hang a pearl earring on every cowslip flower. Goodbye, you dumb old spirit. I’ve got to go. The queen and her elves will be here soon.

ROBIN

The king’s having a party here tonight. Just make sure the queen doesn’t come anywhere near him, because King Oberon is extremely angry. He’s furious because she stole an adorable boy from an Indian king. She’s never kidnapped such a darling human child before, and Oberon’s jealous. He wants the child for himself, to accompany him on his wanderings through the wild forests. But the queen refuses to hand the boy over to Oberon. Instead, she puts flowers in the boy’s hair and makes a fuss over him.

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 2

And now they never meet in grove or green,
 15 By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen.
 But they do square, that all their elves for fear
 Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
 20 Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
 That frights the maidens of the villagery,
 Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
 25 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
 Those that “Hobgoblin” call you, and “sweet Puck,”
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
 Are not you he?

ROBIN

Thou speak’st aright.
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.
 30 I jest to Oberon and make him smile
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip’s bowl
 In very likeness of a roasted crab,
 35 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
 And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
 The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me.
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
 40 And “Tailor!” cries, and falls into a cough,
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.
 But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

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

And now Oberon and Titania refuse to speak to each other, or meet each other anywhere—neither in the forest nor on the plain, nor by the river nor under the stars. They always argue, and the little fairies get so frightened that they hide in acorn cups and won’t come out.

FAIRY

Unless I’m mistaken, you’re that mischievous and naughty spirit named Robin Goodfellow. Aren’t you the one who goes around scaring the maidens in the village, stealing the cream from the top of the milk, screwing up the flour mills, and frustrating housewives by keeping their milk from turning into butter? Aren’t you the one who keeps beer from foaming up as it should, and causes people to get lost at night, while you laugh at them? Some people call you “Hobgoblin” and “sweet Puck,” and you’re nice to them. You do their work for them and give them good luck. That’s you, right?

ROBIN

What you say is true. That’s me you’re talking about, the playful wanderer of the night. I tell jokes to Oberon and make him smile. I’ll trick a fat, well-fed horse into thinking that I’m a young female horse. Sometimes I hide at the bottom of an old woman’s drink disguised as an apple. When she takes a sip, I bob up against her lips and make her spill the drink all over her withered old neck. Sometimes a wise old woman with a sad story to tell tries to sit down on me, thinking I’m a three-legged stool. But I slip from underneath her and she falls down, crying, “Ow, my butt!” and starts coughing, and then everyone laughs and has fun. But step aside, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here’s my mistress, Titania. I wish he’d go away!

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 3

*Enter **OBERON**, the King of Fairies, at one side with his train, and **TITANIA**, the Queen, at the other, with hers*

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

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

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

OBERON

How *not* nice to see you, Titania.

TITANIA

What, are you jealous, Oberon?—Fairies, let’s get out of here. I’ve sworn I’ll never sleep with

Original Text**OBERON**

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

- 50 Then I must be thy lady. But I know
When thou hast stolen away from Fairyland,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
55 Come from the farthest step of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON

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

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 4**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,
70 Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
75 Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
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
80 Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
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
85 For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
90 That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see

Modern Text

him or talk to him again.

OBERON

Wait just a minute, you brazen hussy. Aren’t you supposed to obey me, your lord and husband?

TITANIA

If you’re my lord and husband, I must be your lady and wife, so you’re supposed to be faithful to me. But I know for a fact that you snuck away from Fairyland disguised as a shepherd, and spent all day playing straw pipes and singing love poems to your new girlfriend. The only reason you left India was to come here and see that butch Amazon Hippolyta. She was your boot-wearing mistress and your warrior lover, and now that she’s getting married to Theseus, you’ve come to celebrate their marriage.

OBERON

How can you stand there shamelessly talking about me and Hippolyta, when you know that I know about your love for Theseus? Weren’t you the one who made him desert Perigouna in the middle of the night, right after he’d raped her? And weren’t you the one who made him cheat on all of his other girlfriends, like Aegles, Ariadne, and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are nothing but jealous lies. Since the beginning of midsummer, my fairies and I haven’t been able to meet anywhere to do our dances in the wind without being disturbed by you and your arguments. We haven’t been able to meet on a hill or in a valley, in the forest or a meadow, by a pebbly fountain or a rushing stream, or on the beach by the ocean without you disturbing us. And because you interrupt us so that we can’t dance for them, the winds have made fogs rise up out of the sea and fall down on the rivers so that the rivers flood, just to get revenge on you. So all the work that oxen and farmers have done in plowing the fields has been for nothing, because the unripe grain has rotted before it was ripe. Sheep pens are empty in the middle of the flooded fields, and the crows get fat from eating the dead bodies of infected sheep. All the fields where people usually play games are filled with mud, and you can’t even see the elaborate mazes that people create in the grass, because no one walks in them anymore and they’ve all grown over. It’s not winter here for the human mortals, so they’re not protected by the holy hymns and carols that they sing in winter. So the pale, angry moon, who controls the tides, fills the

Original Text

The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
 95 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
 Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
 The chiding autumn, angry winter change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which.
 100 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension.
 We are their parents and original.

Modern Text

air with diseases. As a consequence of this bad weather and these bad moods the seasons have started to change. Cold frosts spread over the red roses, and the icy winter wears a crown of sweet summer flowers as some sick joke. Spring, summer, fertile autumn and angry winter have all changed places, and now the confused world doesn't know which is which. And this is all because of our argument. We are responsible for this.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 5**OBERON**

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

TITANIA

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

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

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

OBERON

Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away!
 130 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

OBERON

Do something about it, then. You have the power to fix it. Why would Titania want to argue with her Oberon? All I'm asking for is to have that little human boy as part of my crew.

TITANIA

Get over it. I won't give up this child for all of Fairyland. His mother was one of my worshippers, and we always used to gossip together at night in India, sitting together by the ocean and watching the merchant ships sailing on the ocean. We used to laugh to see the sails fill up with wind so that they looked like they had big, pregnant bellies, as if the wind had gotten them pregnant. She would imitate them—since she was already pregnant with the little boy—and she would go sailing over the land herself to go get me little presents, and come back carrying gifts like she was a ship coming back from a voyage. But since she was a mortal, she died giving birth to that boy, and for her sake I'm raising him and will not give him up.

OBERON

How long do you plan to stay here in this forest?

TITANIA

Maybe until after Theseus's wedding day. If you behave yourself and join us in our circle dance and moonlight celebrations, then you can come with us. If not, leave me alone, and I'll stay away from your turf.

OBERON

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

TITANIA

Not for your entire fairy kingdom.—Come, fairies, let's go. We're going to have an out-and-out brawl if I stay any longer.

Exeunt TITANIA and her train

TITANIA and her FAIRIES exit.

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 6

OBERON

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
135 Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin’s back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the seamaid’s music?

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

140 That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
145 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
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.
150 Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wound.
And maidens call it “love-in-idleness.”
Fetch me that flower. The herb I showed thee once.
155 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

160 I’ll put a girdle round about the Earth
In forty minutes.

OBERON

Well, go on your way, then. You won’t leave this
grove until I’ve paid you back for this
insult. (to ROBIN GOODFELLOW) My dear Puck,
come here. You remember the time when I was
sitting on a cliff, and I heard a mermaid sitting on
a dolphin’s back sing such a sweet and
harmonious song that it calmed the stormy sea
and made stars shoot out of the sky so they
could hear her better?

ROBIN

Yes, I remember.

OBERON

That same night, I saw Cupid flying from the
moon to the earth, with all of his arrows ready.
(You couldn’t see him, but I could.) He took aim
at a beautiful young virgin who was sitting on a
throne in the western part of the world, and he
shot his arrow of love well enough to have
pierced a hundred thousand hearts. But I could
see that Cupid’s fiery arrow was put out by
watery, virginal moonbeams, so the royal virgin
continued her virginal thoughts without being
interrupted by thoughts of love. But I paid
attention to where Cupid’s arrow fell. It fell on a
little western flower, which used to be white as
milk but now has turned purple from being
wounded by the arrow of love. Young girls call it
“love-in-idleness.” Bring me that flower. I showed
it to you once. If its juice is put on someone’s
eyelids while they’re asleep, that person will fall
in love with the next living creature he or she
sees. Bring me this plant, and get back here
before the sea monster has time to swim three
miles.

ROBIN

I could go around the world in forty minutes.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 7

Exit ROBIN

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—
165 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey or on busy ape—
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from of her sight—
As I can take it with another herb—

OBERON

When I have the juice of that flower, I’ll trickle
some drops of it on Titania’s eyes while she’s
sleeping. She’ll fall madly in love with the first
thing she sees when she wakes up—even if it’s
a lion, a bear, a wolf, a bull, a monkey, or an
ape. And before I make her normal again—I can
cure her by treating her with another plant—I’ll
make her give me that little boy as my page. But
who’s that coming this way? I’ll make myself

Original Text

170 I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible.
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?

175 The one I'll stay, the other stayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood.
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
185 Or rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot, love you?

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 8

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.
190 Use me but as your spaniel—spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me. Only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love—
And yet a place of high respect with me—
195 Than to be used as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

205 Your virtue is my privilege. For that
It is not night when I do see your face.
Therefore I think I am not in the night.
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world.

Modern Text

invisible and listen to their conversation.

DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.

DEMETRIUS

Look, I don't love you, so stop following me around. Where are Lysander and beautiful Hermia? Lysander I want to stop, but Hermia stops my heart from beating. You told me they escaped into this forest. And here I am, going crazy in the middle of the woods because I can't find my Hermia. Go away, get out of here, and stop following me.

HELENA

You attract me to you, you cruel magnet! But you must not attract iron, because my heart is as true as steel. If you let go of your power to attract me, I won't have any power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I ask you to follow me? Do I speak to you kindly? Don't I tell you in the clearest terms that I do not and cannot love you?

HELENA

Yes, but that makes me love you even more. I'm your little dog, Demetrius. The more you beat me, the more I'll love you. Treat me like you would treat a dog—kick me, hit me, neglect me, try to lose me. Just let me follow behind you, even though I'm not good enough for you. Could I ask for a worse place in your heart than to be treated as you would treat a dog? And yet I would consider it an honor to be your dog.

DEMETRIUS

Don't push it. Just looking at you makes me sick.

HELENA

And I get sick when I can't look at you.

DEMETRIUS

You're risking your reputation by leaving the city and stalking someone who doesn't love you. Standing around alone in a deserted area in the middle of the night isn't the best way to protect your virginity.

HELENA

I rely on your virtue to protect me. And because I can see your shining face, it doesn't feel like nighttime to me. This forest doesn't seem deserted when you're here, because you are all the world to me. So how can anyone say I'm

Original Text

- 210 Then how can it be said I am alone
When all the world is here to look on me?
DEMETRIUS
I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.
HELENA
The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
215 Run when you will, the story shall be changed.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 9

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

- HELENA**
Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
225 Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love as men may do.
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

Exit DEMETRIUS

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

Exit HELENA

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

Enter ROBIN

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

ROBIN
Ay, there it is.

- OBERON**
I pray thee, give it me.
(*takes flower from ROBIN*)
235 I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine.

Modern Text

- 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
The wildest animal isn't as cruel as you are. Run
whenever you want to. The story of Daphne and
Apollo will be changed:

the lustful god Apollo runs away from the virginal
nymph Daphne who pursues him, the dove
chases after the griffin, which is usually its
predator, and the gentle deer tries to hunt down
the tiger—speed is useless when the cowardly
person chases and the brave person runs away.

- DEMETRIUS**
I'm not sticking around to listen to you any
longer. Leave me alone. Or if you follow me,
you'd better understand that I'll do something
bad to you in the forest.

- HELENA**
Yes, you already hurt me in the church, in the
town, and in the fields. Shame on you,
Demetrius! Your behavior is an insult to all
women. We cannot fight for love as men can. We
should be pursued and courted. We weren't
made to do the pursuing.

DEMETRIUS exits.

I'll follow you and turn this hell I'm in into a kind
of heaven. It would be heavenly to be killed by
someone I love so much.

HELENA exits.

- OBERON**
Goodbye, nymph. Before he leaves this part of
the forest, you'll change places: you'll be the one
running away, and he'll be in love with you.

ROBIN enters.

Do you have the flower? Welcome, traveler.

ROBIN
Yes, here it is.

- OBERON**
Please, give it to me. (*he takes the flower
from ROBIN*) I know a place where wild thyme
blooms, and oxlips and violets grow. It's covered
over with luscious honeysuckle, sweet
muskroses and sweetbrier.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 10

Original Text

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
 240 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.
 245 *(gives ROBIN some of the flower)*
 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
 250 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.
 Effect it with some care, that he may prove
 More fond on her than she upon her love.
 And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN

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

Exeunt severally

Modern Text

Titania sleeps there sometimes at night, lulled to sleep among the flowers by dances and other delights. Snakes shed their skin there, and the shed skin is wide enough to wrap a fairy in. I'll put the juice of this flower on Titania's eyes, and fill her with horrible delusions and desires. *(he gives ROBIN part of the flower)* You take some of it too, and look around in this part of the forest. A sweet Athenian lady is in love with a young man who wants nothing to do with her. Put some of this flower's juice on his eyes, and make sure to do it in such a way that the next thing he sees will be the lady. You'll be able to tell it's him because he's wearing Athenian clothes. Do it carefully, so that he'll end up loving her more than she loves him. And then make sure to meet me before the rooster's first crow at dawn.

ROBIN

Don't worry, sir. I'm at your service.

They all exit, separately.

Act 2, Scene 2

Enter TITANIA, Queen of Fairies, with her train 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.

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 *(sing)*
 Philomel, with melody
 Sing in our sweet lullaby.
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
 Never harm
 Nor spell nor charm
 Come our lovely lady nigh.
 So good night, with lullaby.

FIRST FAIRY

(sings)

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

TITANIA

Come, dance in a circle and sing a fairy song, and then go off for a while to do your work. Some of you will kill the worms infesting the rosebuds, some of you will fight with bats to get their leathery wings, so we can make coats for my small elves. Some of you will keep that loud owl away, the one that hoots and wonders every night at us dainty fairies. Sing me to sleep now, and then go off to do your duties and let me rest.

The FAIRIES sing.

FIRST FAIRY

(singing)
 Snakes with forked tongues,
 And porcupines, don't be seen.
 Deadly lizards, don't be mean.
 Don't come near our fairy queen.

FAIRIES

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

FIRST FAIRY

(singing)

Original Text

*Weaving spiders, come not here.
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!*

Modern Text

*Spiders with your webs, stay away.
You long-legged things, begone!*

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 2

*Beetles black, approach not near.
Worm nor snail, do no offense.*

*Black beetles, don’t come near.
Worms and snails, don’t be bad.*

FAIRIES

(sing)

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

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 sleeps

TITANIA falls asleep.

SECOND FAIRY

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

SECOND FAIRY

Okay, let’s go! Everything’s fine now. One of us
will stay and stand guard.

Exeunt FAIRIES

Enter OBERON

The FAIRIES exit.

OBERON enters.

OBERON

15 *(squeezing flower juice on TITANIA ’s eyelids)*
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,
20 Pard or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear,
When thou wakest, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near.

OBERON

(he squeezes flower juice on TITANIA ’s eyelids)
Whatever you see first when you wake up, think
of it as your true love. Love him and yearn for
him, even if he’s a lynx, a cat, a bear, a leopard,
or a wild boar. Whatever’s there when you wake
up will be dear to you. Wake up when something
nasty is nearby.

Exit OBERON

OBERON exits.

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA

LYSANDER and **HERMIA** enter.

LYSANDER

Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood.
25 And to speak troth, I have forgot our way.

LYSANDER

My love, you look like you’re about to faint from
wandering in the woods for so long, and to tell
you the truth, I’ve gotten us lost.

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 3

We’ll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good.
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

We’ll take a rest, if you think it’s a good idea, and
wait until daylight when things will be easier.

HERMIA

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

HERMIA

Let’s do that, Lysander. Find something to
cushion you while you sleep. I’m going to rest my
head on this little slope.

LYSANDER

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

LYSANDER

We can both sleep together on the grass. We’ll
have one heart, one bed, two bodies, and one
faithful vow.

HERMIA**HERMIA**

Original Text

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.
35 Love takes the meaning in love’s conference.
I mean that my heart unto yours is knit
So that but one heart we can make of it.
Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath—
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
40 Then by your side no bed room me deny.
For, lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

HERMIA

Lysander riddles very prettily.
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
45 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off in human modesty.
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid.
So far be distant. And, good night, sweet friend.
50 Thy love ne’er alter till thy sweet life end!

LYSANDER

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

Modern Text

No, Lysander. Please, for my sake, sleep a little farther away. Don’t sleep so close to me.

LYSANDER

Oh, sweetheart, I didn’t mean anything naughty when I said that. When lovers talk to each other, their hearts should understand each other. I just meant that our hearts are joined, so we can almost think of them as one heart. Our two bodies are linked together by the promises we’ve made to each other, so there are two bodies and one faithful vow. So let me sleep next to you. If I lie *next* to you, I won’t lie *to* you—I’ll be faithful and respect you.

HERMIA

Lysander’s got a way with words. I would certainly be rude and shameful if I had implied that you were a liar. But please, darling, sleep a little farther away so we can behave properly. It’s only proper for a well-behaved bachelor and a well-behaved girl to be physically separated like this. Stay away for now, and good night, my sweet friend. I hope your love for me remains this strong for your entire life!

LYSANDER

Amen to that. I hope my life ends before my loyalty to you does. I’ll sleep over here. Sleep well!

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 4

HERMIA

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

HERMIA and LYSANDER sleep
Enter ROBIN

ROBIN

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

HERMIA

You sleep well too.

HERMIA and LYSANDER sleep. ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

I’ve been through the entire forest, but I haven’t found any Athenian man to use the flower on. *(he sees LYSANDER and HERMIA)* Wait a second, who’s this? He’s wearing Athenian clothes. This must be the guy who rejected the Athenian girl. And here’s the girl, sleeping soundly on the damp and dirty ground. Pretty girl! She shouldn’t lie near this rude and heartless man. *(he puts flower juice on LYSANDER’s eyelids)* Jerk, I throw all the power of this magic charm on your eyes. When you wake up, let love keep you from going back to sleep. Wake up when I’m gone, because now I have to go to Oberon.

Original Text

Modern Text

For I must now to Oberon.

Exit ROBIN

ROBIN exits.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running

DEMETRIUS and HELENA enter, running.

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

HELENA

Stop, Demetrius! Stop, even if only to kill me.

DEMETRIUS

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

DEMETRIUS

I’m telling you, get out of here, and don’t follow me around like this.

HELENA

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

HELENA

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

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 5

DEMETRIUS

60 Stay, on thy peril. I alone will go.

DEMETRIUS

Stay here at your own risk. I’m going on alone.

Exit DEMETRIUS

DEMETRIUS exits.

HELENA

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.

65 How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears.

If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,

For beasts that meet me run away for fear.

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

70 Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia’s spherie eyne?

(*sees LYSANDER*)But who is here? Lysander, on the ground?

75 Dead or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.—

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

LYSANDER

(*waking*) And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word

80 Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

HELENA

Do not say so, Lysander. Say not so.

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia? No. I do repent

85 The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love.

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason swayed,

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

HELENA

Oh, I’m out of breath from this foolish chase. The

more I pray, the less I get out of it. Hermia is

lucky, wherever she is, because she has beautiful

eyes. How did her eyes get so bright? Not from

crying. If that’s the case, tears wash my eyes

more than hers. No, no, I’m as ugly as a bear,

since animals that see me run away in terror. So

it’s no surprise that Demetrius runs away from me

as if I were a monster. What evil and deceitful

mirror made me think I could rival Hermia’s starry

eyes? (*she sees LYSANDER*)But who’s this

here? Lysander, on the ground? Is he dead or

sleeping? I don’t see any blood or injuries—

Lysander, if you’re alive, wake up.

LYSANDER

(*waking up*) I’d even run through fire if you told

me to. Radiant, beautiful Helena! I feel like

Mother Nature has allowed me to see into your

heart, as if by magic. Where is Demetrius? Oh, I’d

kill that name with my sword if I could!

HELENA

Don’t say that, Lysander. Don’t say that. Why do

you care that he loves Hermia? What does it

matter? Hermia still loves you, so be happy.

LYSANDER

Happy with Hermia? No. I regret all the boring

time I wasted with her. I don’t love Hermia; I love

Helena. Who wouldn’t love a dove more than a

crow? A man’s desires are influenced by his

logical mind, and it’s simply logical that you’re

more worthy of love than Hermia is.

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 6

- 90 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
- 95 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,
100 Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well. Perforce I must confess
105 I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
Oh, that a lady of one man refused
Should of another therefore be abused!

*Exit HELENA***LYSANDER**

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

Exit LYSANDER

Fruits and vegetables don't ripen until the right season of the year. Likewise, I'm young, and my sense of reason has just ripened. I can finally see the light. My logic has more control over my desires than it used to, and it's telling me to look into your eyes, where I see every love story ever told.

HELENA

Why does everyone always make fun of me? What have I done to deserve this kind of treatment from you? Is it not enough, is it not enough, young man, that I'll never be pretty enough to get a kind look from Demetrius? Do you have to harp on my inadequacy? My God, it's wrong for you to woo me in such a cruel, disdainful way. But goodbye. I have to tell you, I thought you were a much kinder person than this. Oh, how awful that a lady who's been rejected by one man should therefore be treated horribly by another one!

*HELENA exits.***LYSANDER**

She doesn't see Hermia—Hermia, keep sleeping, and don't come near me ever again! Eating too many sweets makes people sick to their stomachs, and people always hate the mistakes they made in the past worse than anyone else hates those mistakes. Hermia, you're the sweet I've had too much of, and the mistake I used to make, so I hate you more than anyone else does.—I'll use all my talents and efforts to serve Helen and bring her honor.

LYSANDER exits.

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 7

HERMIA

- (waking)* Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.
- 120 Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here.
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel pray.
Lysander!—What, removed?—Lysander, lord!—
125 What, out of hearing, gone? No sound, no word?—
Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear.
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No? Then I well perceive you all not nigh.
Either death or you I'll find immediately.

*Exit***HERMIA**

(waking up) Help me, Lysander, help me! Get this snake off of my chest. Oh, my God! What a terrible dream I just had! Lysander, look how I'm shaking from fear. I thought a snake was eating my heart while you sat smiling and watching. Lysander!—What, is he gone?—Lysander, my lord!—What, is he out of earshot? Gone? No answer, nothing? Oh, God, where are you? Say something if you can hear me. Say something, please! I'm almost fainting with fear. Nothing? Then I guess you're nowhere nearby. I'll find you—or die—right away.

HERMIA exits.

Act 3, Scene 1

Original Text

*TITANIA sleeps. Enter the clowns: **BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOOT, 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?

SNOOT

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.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 2

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.

SNOOT

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

Modern Text

*While **TITANIA** is asleep onstage, the clowns— **BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOOT, and STARVELING**—enter.*

BOTTOM

Are we all here?

QUINCE

Right on time. This is the perfect place to rehearse. This clearing will be the stage, and this hawthorn bush will be our dressing room. Let’s put on our play exactly as we’ll perform it for the duke.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What is it, jolly Bottom?

BOTTOM

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never work. First of all, Pyramus has to take out a sword to kill himself, which the ladies in the audience won’t be able to stand. What should we do about that?

SNOOT

By God, that’s a real problem, it’s true.

STARVELING

I think we’ll have to leave out all the killing, come to think of it.

BOTTOM

Not at all! I’ve got a plan that will fix everything. Write me a prologue that I can recite to the audience before the play starts. I’ll tell them that we won’t hurt anyone with our swords, and that Pyramus isn’t really dead. And to make it even clearer, we can tell them that I’m playing Pyramus but I’m not really Pyramus—really, I’m Bottom the weaver. That’ll keep them from being afraid.

QUINCE

All right, we’ll have a prologue then. We’ll write it in alternating eight- and six-syllable lines, just like in a ballad.

BOTTOM

No, add a couple more syllables. Make it eight and eight.

SNOOT

Won’t the ladies be scared of the lion?

STARVELING

I’m really worried about that.

BOTTOM

Sirs, you ought to think to yourself, bringing in—God forbid!—a lion amongst ladies is really

Original Text

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.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 3**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**Modern Text**

terrible. There’s no scarier wild bird than the living lion, and we should remember that.

SNOUT

So we need another prologue to tell everyone he’s not a real lion.

BOTTOM

No, we can just announce the actor’s name, and let his face show through the lion costume, and have him say something himself. He should say the following, or something else to the same defect—“Ladies,” or “Lovely ladies,” “I would like to ask you” or “I would like to request of you” or “I would like to beg you” “not to be afraid, and not to tremble with fear. I value your lives as highly as my own. If you thought I was a real lion, I would be risking my life. But no, I am not at all a lion. I am a man, just like other men.” And then he should say his name, and tell them plainly that he’s Snug the carpenter.

QUINCE

All right, that’s what we’ll do then. But there are two things we still have to figure out. How are we going to bring moonlight into a room? Because, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

We need a calendar! Look in the almanac. Look up moonshine, look up moonshine!

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Well then, you can leave one of the windows open in the big hall where we’ll be performing, and the moon can shine in through the window.

QUINCE

Yes, or else someone will have to come in carrying a bundle of sticks and a lantern and say he’s come to **disfigure**, or represent, the character of Moonshine, because the man in the moon is supposed to carry sticks and a lantern. But there’s still another problem: we need to have a wall in the big hall, because according to the story, Pyramus and Thisbe talked through a little hole in a wall.

SNOUT

Original Text

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.

Modern Text

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

BOTTOM

Someone should play the part of Wall. He can have some plaster or clay or limestone or something on him to show the audience he’s a wall. He can hold his fingers in a V-shape like this, and Pyramus and Thisbe can whisper to each other through that little crack.

QUINCE

If we can do that, everything will be all right. Now sit down, everybody, and rehearse your parts—Pyramus, you start. When you have said your lines, go hide in that bush.—Everyone else, go there too when you’re not onstage.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 4

Enter **ROBIN** unseen

ROBIN enters, unseen by the characters 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.

And by and by I will to thee appear.

35 But hark, a voice!

Stay thou but here awhile,

Exit **BOTTOM**

ROBIN

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

Exit **ROBIN**

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**ROBIN**

(to himself) Who are these country bumpkins swaggering around so close to where the fairy queen is sleeping? What? Are they about to put on a play? I’ll watch. And I’ll act in it, too, if I feel like it.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, come forward.

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) Thisbe, flowers with sweet odious smells—

QUINCE

“Odors,” “odors.”

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS)—odors and smells are like your breath, my dearest Thisbe dear. But what’s that, a voice! Wait here a while. I’ll be right back!

BOTTOM exits.

ROBIN

(to himself) That’s the strangest Pyramus I’ve ever seen.

ROBIN exits.

FLUTE

Am I supposed to talk now?

QUINCE

Yes, you are. You’re supposed to show that you understand that Pyramus just went to check on a noise he heard and is coming right back.

FLUTE

Original Text

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

Modern Text

(as THISBE) Most radiant Pyramus, you are as
 white as a lily, and the color of a red rose on a
 splendid rosebush, a very lively young man and
 also a lovely Jew. You are as reliable as a horse
 that never gets tired. I’ll meet you, Pyramus, at
 Ninny’s grave.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 5

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.

*Enter **BOTTOM**, with an ass’s head, and **ROBIN***

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!

*Exeunt **QUINCE**, **FLUTE**, **SNUG**, **SNOUT**,
 and **STARVELING***

ROBIN

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

*Exit **ROBIN***

BOTTOM

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

*Enter **SNOUT***

QUINCE

That’s “Ninus’s grave,” man. And don’t say all of
 that yet. You’re supposed to say some of it as a
 reply to Pyramus. You just said all your lines at
 once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter. You missed
 your cue. It’s “never get tired.”

FLUTE

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

***ROBIN** enters with **BOTTOM**, with a donkey’s
 head instead of a human head.*

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) If I were handsome, my lovely
 Thisbe, I would still want only you.

QUINCE

Help! It’s a monster! We’re being haunted. Run,
 everyone, run!

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

ROBIN

I’ll follow you. I’ll run you around in circles,
 through bogs and bushes and woods and thorns.
 Sometimes I’ll take the shape of a horse,
 sometimes I’ll take the shape of a hound or a pig
 or a headless bear. Sometimes I’ll turn into fire!
 And I’ll neigh like a horse and bark like a hound
 and grunt like a pig and roar like a bear and burn
 like a fire at every turn.

***ROBIN** exits.*

BOTTOM

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

***SNOUT** enters.*

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 6

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?

*Exit **SNOUT***

SNOUT

Oh, Bottom, you’ve changed! What have you got
 on your head?

BOTTOM

What do you think I’ve got on my head? You’re
 acting like an ass, don’t you think?

***SNOUT** exits.*

Original Text

Modern Text

*Enter QUINCE**QUINCE enters.***QUINCE**

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

QUINCE

God bless you, Bottom, God bless you. You’ve been changed. Reborn.

*Exit QUINCE**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—***BOTTOM**

I see what they’re up to. They want to make an ass of me, to scare me if they can. But I won’t leave this spot, no matter what they do. I’ll walk up and down and sing a song, so they’ll know I’m not afraid.

*(singing)**The blackbird with its black feathers
And its orange-and-tan beak,
The thrush with its clear voice,
The wren with its small, piping chirp—***TITANIA**60 *(waking)* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?**TITANIA***(waking up)* What angel is this who’s waking me up 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”—***BOTTOM***(singing)**The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The gray cuckoo with his simple song
That many men hear
But they don’t dare say no to it—*

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 7

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?

Of course they don’t say “no”! Who’d waste his time talking to such a stupid bird? Who’d bother to accuse a [bird of lying](#), even if the bird were telling him that his wife was cheating on him?**TITANIA**

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.

65 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.

TITANIA

Please sing again, sweet human. I love to listen to your voice, and I love to look at your body. I know this is the first time I’ve ever seen you, but you’re so wonderful that I can’t help swearing to you 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.

BOTTOM

I don’t think you’ve got much of a reason to love me. But to tell you the truth, reason and love have very little to do with each other these days. It’s too bad some mutual friend of theirs doesn’t introduce them. Ha, ha! No, I’m just kidding.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

TITANIA

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.

BOTTOM

No, that’s not true. But if I were smart enough to get out of this forest, I’d be wise enough to satisfy myself.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.

TITANIA

Don’t bother wishing you could leave this forest,

Original Text

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!

Modern Text

because you’re going to stay here whether you want to or not. I’m no ordinary fairy. I rule over the summer, and I love you. So come with me. I’ll give you fairies as servants, and they’ll bring you jewels from the depths of the ocean, and sing to you while you sleep on a bed of flowers. And I’ll turn you into a spirit like us, so you won’t die as humans do.—Come here, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 8

*Enter four
 fairies: 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.

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

PEASEBLOSSOM
 Ready.

COBWEB
 Me too.

MOTH
 Me too.

MUSTARDSEED
 And me too.

ALL
 Where should we go?

TITANIA
 Be kind and polite to this gentleman. Follow him around. Leap and dance for him. Feed him apricots and blackberries, with purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries. Steal honey from the bumblebees, and make candles out of the bees’ wax. Light them with the light of glowworms, so my love will have light when he goes to bed and wakes up. Pluck off colorful butterfly wings, and use them to fan moonbeams away from his eyes as he sleeps. Bow to him, fairies, and curtsy to him.

PEASEBLOSSOM
 Hello, mortal!

COBWEB
 Hello!

MOTH
 Hello!

MUSTARDSEED
 Hello!

BOTTOM
 I beg your pardon, sirs.—Please tell me your name, sir?

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 9

Original Text**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.

Exeunt

Modern Text**COBWEB**

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I’d like to get to know you better, Mr. Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I’ll use you as a bandage to stop the bleeding.—And your name, sir?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Mr. Mustardseed, I know you very well. Those cowardly, gigantic sides of beef have been responsible for many of your family members getting eaten as a condiment on beef. I swear to you, many members of your mustard family have made my eyes water before. I look forward to getting to know you better, Mr. Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Take good care of him. Take him to my sleeping area. The moon looks sad to me. When she cries, all the little flowers cry too. They’re sad because someone is prevented from having sex—or is having it against her will. Keep my lover quiet. Bring him to me in silence.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 2

Enter OBERON, King of Fairies, solus

OBERON

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

Enter ROBIN

- 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,

OBERON, the Fairy King, enters.

OBERON

I wonder if Titania is awake yet, and if she is, I wonder what the first thing she saw was.
Whatever it is, she must be completely in love with it now.

ROBIN enters.

Ah, here comes my messenger.—What’s going on, you crazy spirit? What havoc have you wreaked in this part of the forest?

ROBIN

My mistress Titania is in love with a monster. While she was sleeping in her bed of flowers, a group of bumbling idiots, rough workmen from Athens, got together nearby to rehearse some play they plan to perform on Theseus’s wedding

Original Text

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 nòle 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.

Modern Text

day. The stupidest one, who played Pyramus in their play, finished his scene and went to sit in the bushes to wait for his next cue. I took that opportunity to stick a donkey's head on him. When it was time for him to go back onstage and talk to his Thisbe, he came out of the bushes and everyone saw him. His friends ran away as fast as ducks scatter when they hear a hunter's gunshot. One of them was so frightened when he heard my footsteps that he yelled, "Murder!" and called for help from Athens. They were all so afraid that they completely lost their common sense. They started to become scared of inanimate objects, terrified by the thorns and briars that catch at their clothing and pull off their sleeves and hats. I led them on in this frightened, distracted state, and left sweet

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 2

He "Murder!" cries and help from Athens calls.
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
 30 For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch,
 Some sleeves, some hats—from yielders all things catch.
 I led them on in this distracted fear
 And left sweet Pyramus translated there.
 When in that moment so it came to pass,
 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.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA

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.

Pyramus there, transformed into someone with a donkey's head. At that exact moment, Titania woke up and immediately fell in love with him, an ass.

OBERON

This is going even better than I planned. But have you put the love juice from the flower on the eyes of that Athenian, as I asked you to do?

ROBIN

Yes, I found him when he was asleep—so that's taken care of too—and the Athenian woman was sleeping near him. When he woke up, he must have seen her.

DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.

OBERON

(speaking so that only ROBIN can hear) Step aside. Here's the Athenian coming now.

ROBIN

(speaking so that only OBERON can hear) That's definitely the woman I saw, but it's not the same man.

DEMETRIUS

Why are you so rude to someone who loves you so much? Save that kind of harsh language for your worst enemy.

HERMIA

I'm only scolding you now, but I should treat you

Original Text

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.

Modern Text

much worse, because I'm afraid you've given me good reason to curse you. If you killed Lysander while he was sleeping, then you're already up to your ankles in blood. You might as well jump right into a bloodbath and kill me, too.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 3

- 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?

He was more faithful to me than the sun is to the daytime. Would he have snuck away from me while I was asleep? I'll believe that when I believe that there's a hole through the center of the earth, and the moon has passed all the way through to the other side. The only possibility is that you've 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 look. You've pierced me through the heart with your cruelty, and yet you, the murderer, look as bright and clear as a star in the sky.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I would rather feed his corpse to my dogs.

HERMIA

Get out, dog! You've driven me to my wit's end. Did you kill him, then? From now on I won't even consider you a human being. Oh, just tell the truth for once. Tell the truth, if only for my sake.—
Would you have even dared to look at him when he was awake? And did you kill him while he was sleeping? Oh, how brave of you! A snake could do that as easily as you could. A snake did do it, because no snake ever had a more forked, lying tongue than you have.

DEMETRIUS

You're getting all worked up over a misunderstanding. I didn't kill Lysander. ?As far as I know, he's not even dead.

HERMIA

Then please tell me he's all right.

DEMETRIUS

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

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 4**HERMIA**

A privilege never to see me more.

- 80 And from thy hated presence part I so.

HERMIA

The privilege of never seeing me again. And now I'm going to leave your despised company. You'll

Original Text

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

Exit HERMIA

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

- 90 mistaken quite,

And laid the love juice on some true love’s sight.

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue

Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

Then fate o’errules that, one man holding troth,

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

- 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.

Exit ROBIN

Modern Text

never see me again, whether or not he’s dead.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS

I can’t go after her when she’s in a rage like this.

So I’ll stay here for a while. Sadness gets worse

when you haven’t had enough sleep. I’ll try to

sleep a little here. *(DEMETRIUS lies down and falls asleep)*

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What have you done? You’ve made

a mistake and put the love-juice on someone

else, someone who was truly in love. Because of

your mistake someone’s true love must have

turned bad, instead of this man’s false love being

turned into a true love.

ROBIN

In that case, it must be fate. That’s the way of the

world. For every man who’s faithful to his true

love, a million end up running after a different

lover.

OBERON

Go around the forest, moving faster than the

wind, and make sure you find Helena of

Athens.—She’s lovesick, and her face is pale

from all the sighing she’s been doing, because

sighing is bad for the blood. Bring her here with

some trick or illusion, and I’ll put the charm on his

eyes for when she comes.

ROBIN

I go, I go, look at me go—faster than an arrow

from a [Tartar’s](#) bow.

ROBIN exits

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 5

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.

Enter ROBIN

ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band,

Helena is here at hand,

And the youth, mistook by me,

- 115 Pleading for a lover’s fee.

OBERON

(putting flower juice on DEMETRIUS ’s eyelids)

You purple flower, hit by Cupid’s arrow, sink into

the pupils of this man’s eyes. When he sees the

girl he should love, make her seem as bright to

him as the evening star. Young man, when you

wake up, if she’s nearby, beg her to cure your

lovesickness.

ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Helena is nearby, boss. The young man who I

mistook for this one is there too, begging her to

love him. Should we watch this ridiculous scene?

Lord, what fools these mortals are!

Original Text

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.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA

LYSANDER

- Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
125 Scorn and derision never come in tears.

Modern Text**OBERON**

Step aside. The noise they’re making will wake
up Demetrius.

ROBIN

Then the two of them will both pursue one girl.
That will be funny enough, and preposterous
situations are my favorite thing.

LYSANDER and HELENA enter.

LYSANDER

Why do you think I’m making fun of you when I
tell you I love you? People don’t cry when they’re
mocking someone.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 6

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.

Look, when I swear that I love you, I cry, and
when someone cries while he’s making a
promise, he’s usually telling the truth. How can it
seem like I’m making fun of you, when my tears
prove that I’m sincere?

HELENA

You get trickier and trickier. You’ve made the
same promises to me and to Hermia—they can’t
both be true! They must both be false. The
promises you’re making to me belong to Hermia.
Will you abandon her? If you weighed the
promises you made to me against the promises
you made to her, they’d come out the same—
they both weigh nothing. They’re lies.

LYSANDER

I wasn’t thinking clearly when I made those
promises to her.

HELENA

And I don’t believe you’re thinking clearly now,
as you break those promises.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

(waking up) Oh Helena, you goddess, you divine
and perfect nymph! What can I compare your
eyes to? Crystal isn’t as clear as they are. Oh,
your lips are as ripe as a pair of tempting
cherries touching each other! The pure white of
the snow on a mountaintop seems black as a
crow’s wing next to the whiteness of your hands.
Oh, let me kiss your beautiful white hand. It’ll
make me so happy!

HELENA

Damn it! I see you’re all determined to gang up
on me for a few laughs. If you had any manners

Original Text

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

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 7

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.

Enter HERMIA

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.

Modern Text

at all, you wouldn’t treat me like this. Can’t you just hate me, as I know you do? Do you have to get together to humiliate me too? If you were real men, as you pretend to be, you wouldn’t treat a lady this way, making vows and promises and praising my beauty when I know you’re really both disgusted by me. You’re competing for

Hermia’s love, and now you’re competing to see which one of you can make fun of me the most. That’s a great idea, a really manly thing to do—making a poor girl cry! No respectable person would offend an innocent girl just to have some fun.

LYSANDER

Don’t be cruel, Demetrius. I know you love Hermia, and you know I know it. Right here, right now, I swear I’m giving up all my claims on her and handing her to you. In exchange, give up your claim to love Helena, since I love her and will love her until I die.

HELENA

Nobody’s ever gone to so much trouble just to make fun of someone.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep your Hermia. I don’t want her. If I ever loved her, all that love is gone now. My love for her was temporary. Now I’ll love Helena forever.

LYSANDER

Helena, it’s not true.

DEMETRIUS

Don’t insult a deep love that you don’t understand, or you’ll pay the price. Look, here comes the woman you love.

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

It’s hard to see clearly in the dark of night, but it’s easier to hear well.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 8

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?

I couldn’t see you, Lysander, but I heard your voice, and that’s how I found you. Why did you leave me alone so unkindly?

Original Text**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;

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 9

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?

Modern Text**LYSANDER**

Why stay when love tells you to go?

HERMIA

But what love could make my Lysander leave
 me?

LYSANDER

I had to hurry to my love, beautiful Helena, who
 lights up the night better than all those fiery stars.
 Why are you looking for me? Didn’t you figure
 out that I left you because I hate you?

HERMIA

You can’t mean what you’re saying. It’s
 impossible.

HELENA

So, she’s in on this too! Now I see that all three
 of them have gotten together to play this cruel
 trick on me. Hurtful Hermia, you ungrateful girl,
 have you conspired with these two to provoke
 me with this horrible teasing? Have you forgotten
 all the talks we’ve had together, the vows we
 made to be like sisters to one another, all the
 hours we spent together, wishing that we never
 had to say goodbye—have you forgotten? Our
 friendship in our schooldays, our childhood
 innocence? We used to sit together and sew one
 flower with our two needles, sewing it on one
 piece of cloth, sitting on the same cushion,
 singing one song in the same key, as if our
 hands, our sides, our voices and our minds were
 stuck together. We grew together like twin
 cherries—which seemed to be separate but were
 also together—two lovely cherries on one stem.

We seemed to have two separate bodies, but we
 had one heart. Do you want to destroy our old
 friendship by joining these men to insult your
 poor friend? It’s not friendly, and it’s not ladylike.
 All women would be angry with you for doing it,
 even though I’m the only one who’s hurt by it.

HERMIA

I’m completely dumbfounded by what you’re
 saying. I’m not insulting you. It sounds more like
 you’re insulting me.

HELENA

Come on, confess. Didn’t you send Lysander, as
 an insult, to follow me around praising my eyes

Original Text

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—
 This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 10

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
 255 prayers.—

Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.
 I swear by that which I will lose for thee
 To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

Modern Text

and my face? Haven't you made your other love,
 Demetrius—who kicked me with his foot not long
 ago—call me a goddess and a divine, rare,
 precious, heavenly creature? Why does he talk
 like that to a girl he can't stand? And why does
 Lysander deny that he loves you, when he loves
 you so deeply? Why would he show me any
 affection, unless you told him to? Why does it
 matter that I'm not as lucky or lovable as you are
 and that the love I feel is unrequited? You should
 pity me for that reason, not hate me.

HERMIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

HELENA

Oh, fine. All right, go ahead, keep up your little
 game, pretend to be sympathetic, but then nudge
 each other and wink and make faces at me when
 I turn my back. Keep up your wonderful game.
 You're doing such a good job on this trick,
 someone should write a book about it.

If you had any sense of pity, or manners, you
 wouldn't pretend to fight over me like this. But
 goodbye. It's partly my own fault, since I followed
 you here. Leaving—or dying—will soon take care
 of everything.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

That's a good one.

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER) Don't insult her like that,
 Lysander darling.

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER) If Hermia's begging can't make
 you stop insulting Helena, I can force you to do
 so.

LYSANDER

You can't force me any more than Hermia can
 beg me. Your threats are no stronger than her
 whining.—Helena, I love you. I swear I do. I'll
 give my life for you, just to prove this guy wrong
 when he says I don't love you.

DEMETRIUS

I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER

If that's what you say, go fight a duel with me
 and prove it.

Original Text

DEMETRIUS

260 Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

(holds LYSANDER back)

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Away, you Ethiopel!

DEMETRIUS

(to HERMIA)

No, no. He’ll

Seem to break loose.

Modern Text

DEMETRIUS

You’re on. Let’s do it.

HERMIA

Lysander, where are you going with all this?

(she holds LYSANDER back)

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get away, you African!

DEMETRIUS

(to HERMIA) No, no. He’ll act like he’s going to break free from you, Hermia.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 11

(to LYSANDER)

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

(to LYSANDER)

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me? Wherefore? O me! What news, my love?

280 Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.

Why then, you left me—Oh, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,

(to LYSANDER) Pretend like you’re going to follow me, but then don’t come. You’re a coward, get out of here!

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Stop hanging on me, you cat, you thorn. Let go of me, or I’ll shake you off like a snake.

HERMIA

Why have you gotten so rude? What’s happened to you, my darling?

LYSANDER

Your darling? Get out, you dark-skinned gypsy! Get out, you horrible poison. Get out!

HERMIA

Are you joking?

HELENA

Of course he is, and so are you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I’m ready to fight you as promised.

DEMETRIUS

I wish we had a signed legal contract. I can see you don’t keep your promises very well. I don’t trust you.

LYSANDER

What? Do you want me to hit Hermia, hurt her, kill her? Sure, I hate her, but I wouldn’t hurt her.

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER) Can you hurt me any more than by saying you hate me? Hate me? Why? What’s happened to you, my love? Am I not Hermia? Aren’t you Lysander? I’m as beautiful now as I was a little while ago. You still loved me when we fell asleep, but when you woke up you left me. So you left me—Oh, God help me!—For real?

LYSANDER

I certainly did, and I never wanted to see you

Original Text

285 And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 12

Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me!

290 (to HELENA) You juggler! You canker-blossom!
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.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 13

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

Modern Text

again. So stop hoping and wondering what I mean.

I've spelled it out for you clearly. It's no joke. I hate you and love Helena.

HERMIA

Oh, no! (to HELENA) You trickster, you snake! You thief! What, did you sneak in at night and steal my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Oh, that's very nice! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You're going to make me mad enough to answer you? Damn you, you faker, you puppet!

HERMIA

“Puppet”? Why “puppet”?—Oh, I see where this is going. She's talking about our difference in height. She's paraded in front of him to show off how tall she is. She won him over with her height.—Does he have such a high opinion of you because I'm so short? Is that it? So how short am I, you painted barber pole? Tell me. How short am I? I'm not too short to gouge your eyes out with my fingernails.

HELENA

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS) Please don't let her hurt me, gentlemen, however much you want to tease me. I never was much good with insults. I'm not mean and catty like her. I'm a nice shy girl. Please don't let her hit me. Maybe you think that because she's shorter than me I can take her.

HERMIA

“Shorter!” See, she's doing it again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, please don't act so bitter toward me. I always loved you, Hermia, and gave you advice. I never did anything to hurt you—except once, when I told Demetrius that you planned to sneak off into this forest. And I only did that because I loved Demetrius so much. He followed you. And I followed him because I loved him. But he told me to get lost and threatened to hit me, kick me—even kill me. Now just let me go quietly back to Athens. I'll carry my mistakes back with

Original Text

- 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**
(to LYSANDER)
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.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 14

- 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.
- Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS*
- 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.

Modern Text

- me. I won't follow you anymore. Please let me go. You see how naïve and foolish I've been.
- HERMIA**
Well, get out of here then! What's keeping you?
- HELENA**
My stupid heart, which I'm leaving behind here.
- HERMIA**
What, you're leaving it with Lysander?
- HELENA**
No, with Demetrius.
- LYSANDER**
Don't be afraid. She can't hurt you, Helena.
- DEMETRIUS**
(to LYSANDER) That's right, Hermia won't hurt Helena even if you try to help her.
- HELENA**
Oh, when you get her angry, she's a good fighter, and vicious too. She was a hellcat in school. And she's fierce, even though she's little.
- HERMIA**
"Little" again? Nothing but "little" and "short"!—
Why are you letting her insult me like this? Let me at her!.

- LYSANDER**
(to HERMIA) Get lost, you dwarf, you tiny little weed, you scrap, you acorn!
- DEMETRIUS**
You're doing too much to defend a woman who wants nothing to do with you. Leave Hermia alone. Don't talk about Helena. Don't take Helena's side. If you continue treating Hermia so badly, you'll pay for it.
- LYSANDER**
Hermia's not holding onto me anymore. Follow me if you're brave enough, and we'll fight over Helena.
- DEMETRIUS**
"Follow"? No, I'll walk right next to you, side by side.

DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.

- HERMIA**
All this fighting is because of you. Stay where you are.
- HELENA**
I'm not sticking around here any more. I don't trust you. You might be a better fighter than I am, but my legs are longer and I can run away faster.

Original Text

Modern Text

My legs are longer though, to run away.

Exit **HELENA**

HELENA exits.

HERMIA

355 I am amazed and know not what to say.

HERMIA

I just can’t believe any of this. I don’t know what to say.

Exit **HERMIA**

HERMIA exits.

OBERON

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

OBERON

(to **ROBIN**) This is all your fault. You make mistakes constantly, or else you cause this kind of trouble on purpose.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 15

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.

ROBIN

Believe me, King of Illusions, I made a mistake.
Didn’t you tell me that I’d be able to recognize
the man by the Athenian clothes he was
wearing? So far I’ve done exactly what I was
supposed to do—I put the love potion on an
Athenian’s eyes. And so far I’m pleased with the
way things have turned out, since I find all of this
commotion very 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.

OBERON

As you can see, these lovers are looking for a
place to fight. Hurry up, Robin, and make the
night dark and cloudy. Cover the sky with a low-
hanging fog, as dark as hell, and get these
overeager rivals so completely lost in the woods
that they can’t run into each other. Imitate
Lysander’s voice and egg Demetrius on with
insults. Then rant for a while in Demetrius’s
voice, and egg Lysander on. That way you’ll get
them away from each other until they’re so
exhausted that they’ll sleep like the
dead. (OBERON gives a new flower
to **ROBIN**) When they’re asleep, crush some of
this flower’s juice into Lysander’s eyes. The
flower’s juice has the power to erase all the
damage that’s been done to his eyes, and to
make him see normally, the way he used to.
When they wake up, all this trouble and conflict
will seem like a dream or a meaningless vision.
Then the lovers will go back to Athens, united
together until death. While you’re busy with that,
I’ll go see Queen Titania and ask her once again
for the Indian boy. And then I’ll undo the spell
that I cast over her, so she won’t be in love with
that monster anymore. Then everything will be
peaceful again.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 16

ROBIN

390 My fairy lord, this must be done with haste.

ROBIN

We’ve got to act fast, my lord of the fairies.

Original Text

For night’s swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora’s harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and
there,

- 395 Troop home to churchyards. Damnèd spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone.
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON

- 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.

Exit OBERON

ROBIN

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

Enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

Modern Text

Night’s fading quickly, and in the distance the
morning star is shining, warning us that dawn is
coming. At dawn, the ghosts that have been
wandering around all night go home to the
graveyards. The souls of people who weren’t
buried in holy ground, but instead lie rotting by
the side of the road or at the bottom of a river,
have already gone back to their wormy graves.
They weren’t buried in a real graveyard because
they committed suicide, and they don’t want their
shame to be seen in daylight, so they avoid
sunlight and stay forever in the darkness of night.

OBERON

But we’re not like that. We’re a different kind of
spirit, and we don’t have to run away from the
sunlight. I like the morning. I often wander
around in the woods like a forest ranger until the
sun rises in the fiery red sky over the ocean,
turning the salty green water to gold. But you
should hurry anyway. Don’t delay. We still have
time to get all of this done before daybreak.

OBERON exits.

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
The people fear me in the country and the town.
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one of them now.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

Where are you, Demetrius, you arrogant
bastard? Say something.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 17**ROBIN**

- 410 *(as DEMETRIUS)*
Here, villain. Drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS) Follow me then
To plainer ground.

Exit LYSANDER

Enter DEMETRIUS

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

ROBIN

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

LYSANDER

I’m coming.

ROBIN

(in DEMETRIUS’s voice) Let’s go to a flatter area
where we can fight more easily.

LYSANDER exits.

DEMETRIUS enters.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, say something! You coward, did you
run away from me? Say something! Are you
behind some bush? Where are you hiding?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER’s voice) You coward, are you

Original Text

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.

Exeunt

Enter LYSANDER

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,

Modern Text

bragging to the stars and telling the bushes that
you want a fight, but then you won’t come and
fight me? Come here, you coward! Come here,
you child! I’ll beat you with a stick. It would be
shameful to fight you with a sword, the way I
would fight with a real man.

DEMETRIUS

Are you there?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER’s voice) Follow my voice. This
isn’t a good place to fight.

They exit.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

He’s walking ahead of me, and he keeps daring
me to follow him. When I reach the place he’s
calling from, he disappears. This villain is much
quicker than I am. I ran after him fast, but he ran
away from me faster, so that now here I am in
some dark part of the forest where the ground is
uneven.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 18

And here will rest me.

430 *(lies down)*

Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

I’ll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.

(sleeps)

Enter ROBIN and DEMETRIUS

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER to DEMETRIUS)

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

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou darest! For well I wot

Thou runn’st before me, shifting every place,

And darest not stand nor look me in the face.

Where art thou now?

ROBIN

440 (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.

Now go thy way. Faintness constraineth me

To measure out my length on this cold bed.

445 By day’s approach look to be visited.

(lies down and sleeps)

Enter HELENA

I’ll rest here. *(he lies down)* I hope the pleasant
daytime comes soon! As soon as the gray light of
early morning appears, I’ll find Demetrius and get
my revenge for this insult.

*LYSANDER lies down and falls
asleep. ROBIN and DEMETRIUS enter.*

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER’s voice) Ha, ha, ha! Hey, You
coward, why aren’t you coming?

DEMETRIUS

Wait for me, if you’re not too scared! I know
that’s why you’re running away from me,
constantly changing places—you’re afraid to
stand still and wait for me. You’re scared to look
me in the eye. Where are you now?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER’s voice) Come here. I’m over
here.

DEMETRIUS

No, you’re just taunting me. You’ll pay for this if I
ever see you face-to-face in the daylight. Go
wherever you want. I’m exhausted; I need to lie
down and sleep on this cold ground. But watch
out. I’ll find you at dawn. *(DEMETRIUS lies down
and sleeps)*

HELENA enters.

Original Text

HELENA

O weary night, O long and tedious night,
 Abate thy hours. Shine comforts from the east,
 That I may back to Athens by daylight
 450 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)

Modern Text

HELENA

Oh, what a long, tedious, exhausting night! I wish it would end. I wish the comforting light of day would shine so I can go back to Athens and get away from these people who hate me so much. I hope I’ll be able to sleep and escape my troubles for a while. People can sometimes forget their difficulties when they’re asleep. *(HELENA lies down and sleeps)*

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 19

ROBIN

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

ROBIN

Only three so far? We’re still waiting for one more. Two of both kinds makes four. Ah, here she comes, angry and sad. Cupid is a bad boy for making poor women go crazy like this.

*Enter HERMIA**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!
 460 *(lies down and sleeps)*

HERMIA

I’ve never been more exhausted or upset. I’m all wet from the dew and scratched up by thorns, and I can’t crawl any farther. I just can’t go on. My legs can’t hold themselves up. I’ll sleep here until morning. If they do fight, I hope Lysander is safe! *(HERMIA lies down and sleeps)*

ROBIN

On the ground
 Sleep sound.
 I’ll apply
 To your eye.
 Gentle lover, remedy.
(squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER’s eyes)
 When thou wakest,
 Thou takest
 True delight
 In the sight
 Of thy former lady’s eye.
 And the country proverb known—
 That every man should take his own—
 In your waking shall be shown.
 Jack shall have Jill.
 Nought shall go ill.
 The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

ROBIN

Sleep well there on the ground. I’ll cure you, gentle lover, by putting this medicine on your eyes. *(ROBIN puts the nectar of the flower on LYSANDER’s eyelids)* When you wake you will be truly delighted to see the woman you once loved. And when you wake up, you’ll be a walking illustration of the well-known country proverb. “Jack will have Jill and everything will be all right.”

*Exit ROBIN**ROBIN exits.*

Act 4, Scene 1

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA sleep.
Enter TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies; and BOTTOM, with the ass’s head; and fairies PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED; OB

DEMETRIUS, HELENA, HERMIA, and LYSANDER are still sleeping on the stage. TITANIA enters with BOTTOM, who still has a donkey’s

Original Text

ERON the king behind them, unseen

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.

1 Where’s Monsieur Mustardseed?

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MUSTARDSEED

Ready.

Modern Text

head, and the
fairies **PEASEBLOSSOM**, **COBWEB**,
MOTH,
and **MUSTARDSEED**. **OBERON** enters
behind them, unseen by those onstage.

TITANIA

(to **BOTTOM**) Come over here and sit down on this flowery bed while I caress those lovable cheeks. I’ll put roses on your silky, smooth head and kiss your big, beautiful ears, my gentle darling.

BOTTOM

Where’s Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Here.

BOTTOM

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

COBWEB

Here.

BOTTOM

Monsieur Cobweb, sir, get out your weapons and kill me a striped bumblebee on a thistle, and bring me its honey. Don’t tire yourself out, monsieur. Oh, and monsieur, be careful not to break the honey-sac. I’d hate to see you drowned in honey, sir.

Exit **COBWEB**

COBWEB exits.

Where’s Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

Here.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 2

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**BOTTOM**

Give me your first, Mr. Mustardseed. Please, stop bowing, good sir.

MUSTARDSEED

What would you like me to do?

BOTTOM

Nothing, good sir, except to help Sir Cobweb scratch my head. I should go to the barber’s, monsieur, because I think I’m getting really hairy around the face. And I’m such a sensitive ass that if my hair even tickles me a little, I need to scratch.

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

Original Text

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.

Exeunt FAIRIES

Modern Text

I have a pretty good ear for music. Let’s hear someone play the triangle and the sticks.

TITANIA

Or tell me, my sweet love, what you’d like to eat.

BOTTOM

Actually, I’d like a few pounds of grass. I’d like to munch on some good dry oats. Or maybe I’ve got a hankering for a bundle of hay. There’s nothing like good hay, really sweet hay.

TITANIA

I have an adventurous fairy who’ll go seek out the squirrel’s secret stash and get you some 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. I really want to sleep now.

TITANIA

Go to sleep, and I will wrap my arms around you.
Fairies, go away. Run off in all directions.

The FAIRIES exit.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 3

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

TITANIA and BOTTOM sleep

Enter ROBIN

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,

I’m putting my arms around you just like the woodbine tendril gently twists itself around the sweet honeysuckle, and like the female ivy curls itself around the branches of the elm tree. Oh, how I love you! I’m so crazy about you!

BOTTOM and TITANIA sleep. ROBIN enters.

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Do you see this sweet sight? Now I’m starting to pity Titania for being so infatuated. I ran into her recently at the edge of the forest, looking for sweet presents for this hateful idiot, and I scolded her and argued with her. She had put a wreath of fresh, fragrant flowers around his hairy forehead, and the drops of dew that lay in the center of the flowers made the flowers look like they were crying with shame to be decorating the head of that ugly jackass. When I had taunted her as much as I wanted to, and she begged me very nicely to leave her alone, I asked her for the stolen Indian child. She said yes right away, and sent a fairy to bring him to my home in Fairyland. And now that I have the boy, I’ll undo the spell that makes her vision so disgustingly wrong. And, gentle Puck, take this transformed ass’s head off of the head of that Athenian man, so that when he wakes up at the same time as the rest of them do, they can all go back to Athens. They’ll only remember the events

Original Text

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.

(squeezing flower juice into TITANIA’s eyes)

Modern Text

of tonight as a very unpleasant dream. But first I’ll
release the fairy queen from the spell.

*(OBERON squeezes the juice from the second
flower into TITANIA’s eyes)*

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 4

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 blessed 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

ROBIN

(taking the ass’s head off BOTTOM)
Now when thou wakest, with thine own fool’s eyes
peep.

OBERON

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

Be like you used to be, and see like you used to
see. This bud belongs to Diana, the goddess of
virginity, and it has the power to undo the effects
of Cupid’s flower. Now, Titania, wake up, my
sweet queen.

TITANIA

(waking up) Oberon, I’ve had such a strange
dream! I dreamed I was in love with an ass.

OBERON

There’s your boyfriend, sleeping right over there.

TITANIA

How did this happen? Oh, I hate looking at his
face now!

OBERON

Be quiet for a while.—Robin, take off his donkey
head.—Titania, get the fairies to play some
music, and make these five people sleep more
soundly than humans have ever slept before.

TITANIA

Music! Play the kind of music that puts people to
sleep.

The music plays.

ROBIN

(removing the ass’s head from BOTTOM) When
you wake up, see things with your own foolish
eyes again.

OBERON

Play the music.—Take my hands, my queen, and
we’ll lull these people to sleep with our soft
dancing. *(he dances with TITANIA)* Now that you
and I are friends again, we can dance for Duke
Theseus tomorrow at midnight, and bless his
marriage and his marriage bed. These other
lovers will get married alongside him, and they’ll
all be in high spirits.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 5

ROBIN

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

OBERON

ROBIN

Listen, Fairy King. I can hear the lark singing.
Morning’s here.

OBERON

Original Text

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.

Exeunt OBERON, TITANIA, and ROBIN

*Wind horn within Enter THESEUS and all his
train, EGEUS, and HIPPOLYTA*

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.

Exit one of the train

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,

Modern Text

In that case, my queen, let’s travel silently and solemnly across the globe to where it’s still night, circling the earth faster than the moon does.

TITANIA

While we’re walking, you can tell me how I ended up sleeping on the ground with these humans last night.

OBERON, TITANIA, and ROBIN exit.

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

THESEUS

One of you go find the forest ranger. Since we’re done with the May Day rites and it’s still so early in the morning, my love will have a chance to hear the beautiful music of my hunting dogs barking as they chase their prey. Unleash the dogs in the western valley. Let them go. Now go find the forest ranger.

A servant exits.

My beautiful queen, we’ll go up the mountain and listen to the hounds as their barking echoes in the cliffs and sounds like music.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with the heroes Hercules and Cadmus once, when their Spartan hunting dogs cornered a bear. I’d never heard such impressive barking before.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 6

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.
(sees the four sleeping lovers)
But, soft! What nymphs are these?

EGEUS

My lord, this is my daughter here asleep.

The forests, the skies, the mountains, everything around us seemed to echo the barks of the hounds. I’d never heard such raucous music, such pleasant thunder.

THESEUS

My dogs are bred from Spartan hounds. They have the same folds of flesh around their mouths, the same sandy-colored fur, and hanging ears that brush the morning dew off the grass. They have crooked knees and folds of skin under their necks, just like the Spartan hounds. They’re not very fast in the chase, but their barking sounds like bells ringing. Each bark is perfectly in tune with the others, like notes on a scale. No one, anywhere, has ever gone hunting with a more musical pack of dogs. Judge for yourself when you hear them. *(he sees the four lovers sleeping)* But wait a minute! Who are these women?

EGEUS

My lord, that’s my daughter asleep on the ground

Original Text

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.

Exit one of the train

Wind horns and shout

*within LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and HERMIA wake and start up*

125 Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.

Modern Text

over there, and this is Lysander here, and this is Demetrius, and this is Helena, old Nedar’s daughter. I don’t understand why they’re all here together.

THESEUS

They probably woke up early to celebrate May Day and came here for my celebration when they heard I’d be here. But tell me, Egeus. Isn’t today the day when Hermia has to tell us her decision about whether she’ll marry Demetrius?

EGEUS

It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go tell the hunters to blow their horns and wake them up.

A servant exits.

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

Good morning, my friends. Valentine’s Day is over.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 7

Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?

**LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and HERMIA** kneel

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

THESEUS

I pray you all, stand up.

**LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and HERMIA** stand

(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 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—

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,

Are you lovebirds only starting to pair 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** get up.

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS) I know you two are enemies. Has the world really become so gentle and peaceful that people who hate each other have started to trust each other and sleep beside each other without being afraid?

LYSANDER

My lord, what I say may be a little confused, since I’m half asleep and half awake. I swear, at the moment I really couldn’t tell you how I ended up here. But I think—I want to tell you the truth, and now that I think about it, I think this is true—I came here with Hermia. We were planning to leave Athens to escape the Athenian law and—

EGEUS

(to THESEUS) Enough, enough, my lord. You’ve heard enough evidence! I insist that the law punish him—They were going to run away, Demetrius, they were running away to defeat us,

Original Text

- 145 Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.
- DEMETRIUS**
(to THESEUS) My lord, fair Helen told me of their
stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood.
- 150 And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 8

- 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.
- Exeunt THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train*
- DEMETRIUS**
These things seem small and undistinguishable,
175 Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.
- HERMIA**
When everything seems double. Methinks I see
these things with parted eye,
- HELENA**
So methinks.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 9

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

Modern Text

- robbing you of your wife and me of my fatherly
right to decide who my son-in-law will be.
- DEMETRIUS**
(to THESEUS) My lord, the beautiful Helena told
me about their secret plan to escape into this
forest. I was furious and followed them here, and
the lovely Helena was so in love with me that she
followed me.

I'm not sure how it happened—but somehow,
something made my love for Hermia melt away
like snow. My past love for Hermia now seems
like a memory of some cheap toy I used to love
as a child. Now the only person I love, and
believe in, and want to look at, is Helena. I was
engaged to her before I ever met Hermia. Then I
hated her for a time, as a sick person hates the
food he usually loves. But now I have my natural
taste back, like a sick person when he recovers.
Now I want Helena, I love her, I long for her, and
I will always be true to her.

- THESEUS**
You pretty lovers are lucky you met me here.
We'll talk more about this later.—Egeus, I'm
overriding your wishes. These couples will be
married along with me and Hippolyta in the
temple later today.—And now, since the morning
is almost over, we'll give up on the idea of
hunting. Come with us to Athens. We three
couples will celebrate with a sumptuous feast.
Come, Hippolyta.

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

- DEMETRIUS**
What exactly just happened? The events of last
night seem small and hard to see clearly, like far-
off mountains that look like clouds in the
distance.
- HERMIA**
Yes, it's like my eyes are out of focus, and I'm
seeing everything double.
- HELENA**
Me too.

Original Text

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.

*Exeunt LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and HERMIA*

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.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 10

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.

Exit

Act 4, Scene 2

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING

QUINCE

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

STARVELING

Modern Text

mine because I found it, but I feel like someone else could easily come and claim it was hers.

DEMETRIUS

Are you sure we’re awake? It seems to me like we’re still sleeping, still dreaming. Do you remember seeing the duke here? Did he tell us to follow him?

HERMIA

Yes, he did. 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. We can tell one another our dreams along the way.

*LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and HERMIA exit.*

BOTTOM

(waking up) Tell me when my cue comes, and I’ll say my line. My next cue is “Most handsome Pyramus.” Hey! Peter Quince? Flute the bellows-repairman? Snout the handyman? Starveling? My God, they’ve all run away and left me sleeping here? What a weird dream I had.—You can’t even describe such a weird dream. You’d be an ass if you even tried to explain it. I thought I was—no, nobody can even describe what I was. I thought I was, I thought I had—but a person would be an idiot to try to say what I thought I had. No eye has ever heard, no ear has ever seen, no hand has tasted, or tongue felt, or heart described what my dream was like. I’ll get Peter Quince to write this dream down as a ballad.

I’ll call it “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 a play. Or maybe, to make it even more lovely, I’ll sing it when the heroine dies.

BOTTOM exits.

*QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT,
and STARVELING enter.*

QUINCE

Have you sent anyone to Bottom’s house? Has he come home yet?

STARVELING

Original Text

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.

Enter SNUG

SNUG

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

FLUTE

O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life. He could not have 'scaped sixpence a day. An the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged.

Modern Text

No one's heard from him. I'm sure he's been kidnapped.

FLUTE

If he doesn't show up, the play is ruined. It won't go on. Will it?

QUINCE

No, it would be impossible. He's the only person in Athens who can play Pyramus.

FLUTE

Definitely. He's quite simply the smartest working-man in Athens.

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

You mean “paragon.” A “paramour” is something bad.

SNUG enters.

SNUG

The duke's leaving the temple. Two or three more lords and ladies have been married too. If we'd been able to put on our play, we would have had it made.

FLUTE

Oh that great, funny guy, Bottom! He would have gotten a pension of six pence a day for his whole life. Six pence a day would've been forced on him. I'll be damned if the duke wouldn't have given him six pence a day for playing Pyramus.

Act 4, Scene 2, Page 2

10 He would have deserved it. Sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter BOTTOM

BOTTOM

Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Masters, I am to discourse wonders—but ask me not what, for if I tell you I am 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

And he would have deserved it too. Pyramus is worth **six pence a day**, or it's worth nothing!

BOTTOM enters.

BOTTOM

Where are my guys? Where are my good fellows?

QUINCE

Bottom! Oh, how wonderful to see you! Oh, what a relief!

BOTTOM

My friends, I've got some amazing things to tell you—but don't ask me to tell you what. I swear by my Athenian citizenship that I won't tell you anything. I'll tell you everything exactly as it happened.

QUINCE

Tell us, Bottom.

BOTTOM

No, you won't get a word out of me. All I'll tell you is that the duke has had dinner already. Now it's

Original Text

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!

*Exeunt***Modern Text**

time to get your costumes together. Find some good strings for tying on your false beards, and grab new ribbons to decorate your shoes. Meet me at the palace as soon as possible. Look over your lines again. Our play's going to be performed for the duke! So make sure Thisbe's wearing clean underwear, and make sure whoever's playing the lion doesn't cut his nails, because he needs them long to look like lion's claws. And no one eat any onions or garlic. If we have sweet-smelling breath, I'm sure they'll say "it's a sweet play." Now no more talking. Get busy, go!

*They all exit.***Act 5, Scene 1**

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

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE enter, with a number of lords and servants.

HIPPOLYTA

These lovers are saying some strange things, Theseus.

THESEUS

Yes, strange—and totally made up too. I'll never believe any of these old legends or fairy tales. Lovers and madmen hallucinate about things that sane people just can't understand. Lunatics, lovers, and poets all are ruled by their overactive imaginations. Some people think they see devils and monsters everywhere—and they're lunatics. Lovers are just as crazy, and think a dark-skinned gypsy is the most gorgeous woman in the world. Poets are always looking around like they're having a fit, confusing the mundane with the otherworldly, and describing things in their writing that simply don't exist. All these people have such strong imaginations that, when they feel happy, they assume a god or some other supernatural being is bringing that happiness to them. Or if they're afraid of something at night, they look at the shrubbery and imagine it's a wild bear!

HIPPOLYTA

But the story that these lovers are telling, and the fact that they all saw and heard exactly the same things, make me think there's more going on here than imaginary fantasies. Their story is bizarre and astounding, but it's solid and consistent.

Original Text

Enter lovers: **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
35 Between our after-supper and bedtime?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

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

THESEUS

45 *(reads)*
“The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.”
We’ll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
“The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.”
That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

Modern Text

The lovers—
LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and **HERMIA**—enter.

THESEUS

Here come the lovers, laughing happily.—I wish
you joy, my friends! I hope the days ahead are full
of joy for you.

LYSANDER

We wish you even more joy, and hope joy comes
to you in your royal walks, at your table, and in
your royal bed!

THESEUS

Now, what kind of entertainment do we have to fill
up the long three hours between dinner and
bedtime? Where is our entertainment director?
What performances have been prepared? Aren’t
there any plays for us to enjoy while we wait in
torture for bedtime to come? Let me see
Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

Here I am, Theseus.

THESEUS

Tell us what entertainment you’ve prepared for
the evening. Which plays, what music? How will
we pass the time without some entertainment?

PHILOSTRATE

(giving THESEUS a piece of paper) Here’s a list
of all of the acts that have been prepared.
Choose which one you want to see first.

THESEUS

(reading) “The battle between Hercules and the
Centaurs, to be sung by an Athenian eunuch,
accompanied by a harp.” No, we won’t see that.
I’ve already told that story to Hippolyta, while
praising my cousin Hercules. What else? “The riot
of the drunk Bacchanals who rip the singer
Orpheus to shreds.” That’s an old show, and I
saw it the last time I came back from conquering

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 3

“The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary.”
50 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

Thebes. “The nine Muses mourning the death of
learning and scholarship.” That’s some sharp,
critical satire, and it’s not appropriate for a
wedding. “A tedious short drama about young
Pyramus and his love Thisbe, a very sad and
tragic comedy.” A sad comedy? Short but still
tedious? That’s like hot ice and strange snow.
How can this drama be so many contradictory
things?

PHILOSTRATE

Original Text

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 cru 'l pain

75 To do you service.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 4**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.

Exit PHILOSTRATE

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'er charged
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,

Modern Text

It's a play about ten words long, which is the shortest play I've ever heard of. But in my opinion, it's about ten words too long. That's why it's tedious. In the entire play, not one word is well-written, and not one of the actors is right for his part. It's tragic because Pyramus kills himself. I have to admit that when I saw his suicide during rehearsal, I had tears in my eyes—but they were tears of laughter.

THESEUS

Who are the actors?

PHILOSTRATE

Rough workmen from Athens who never spent much time thinking. Now they've worn out their out-of-shape brains to put on this play for your wedding.

THESEUS

So let's see it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord. This play isn't right for you. I've seen the whole thing, and it's completely worthless—unless you think their bad acting and their misremembered lines—which they memorized so painfully—are funny.

THESEUS

I'll watch this play. Nothing can really be bad when it's created by simple people who try hard. Come on, bring them in. And sit down, ladies.

PHILOSTRATE exits.

HIPPOLYTA

I don't like seeing poor people overburdened or looking bad when they're trying to do something good.

THESEUS

You won't see anything like that, sweetheart.

HIPPOLYTA

He just said that they're no good at acting.

THESEUS

Then we're even kinder people for thanking them for something that they're not good at. We'll entertain ourselves by accepting their mistakes. When poor dutiful people can't do certain things well, generous people can consider the effort they put into it rather than the effect that they produce. In my travels, great scholars have come up to me, meaning to greet me with well-rehearsed welcoming speeches, and I have seen them

Original Text

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.

Enter PHILOSTRATE

Modern Text

tremble and turn pale, and pause inappropriately in the middle of their sentences, and botch their well-rehearsed tones of voice because they’re so nervous, and then break off abruptly at the end, without actually welcoming me. Trust me, my sweet, I figured out that they were trying to welcome me even though they were silent, and that message was as clear from someone who was modest and nervously dutiful as it is from someone who is loud and audacious and eloquent. Therefore, love and tongue-tied simplicity can say the most even when they’re saying the least, in my opinion.

PHILOSTRATE enters.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 5**PHILOSTRATE**

100 So please your grace, the Prologue is addressed.

THESEUS

Let him approach.

Enter QUINCE as the PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

(delivered by QUINCE)

If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think we come not to offend,

105 But with good will. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come but in despite.

We do not come as minding to contest you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight

110 We are not here. That you should here repent you,

The actors are at hand, and by their show

You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYSANDER

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.

PHILOSTRATE

Your grace, the person who is going to deliver the prologue is ready.

THESEUS

Let him come forward.

The PROLOGUE (QUINCE) enters.

PROLOGUE

If we happen to offend you, it’s because we want to. We don’t want you to think we came here to offend you, except that we want to offend you with our good intentions. Our plan to show off our little bit of talent will wind up getting us executed. Please keep in mind we’re only here out of spite. We don’t come here with the intention of making you happy. We’re absolutely not here to delight you. The actors are ready to come out and make you sorry. By watching their show, you’ll find out everything you’re likely to know.

THESEUS

This guy doesn’t pay much attention to punctuation.

LYSANDER

He rode that prologue like a wild horse. He didn’t know how to stop it. The moral of this story is that it’s not enough to speak; you have to speak grammatically.

HIPPOLYTA

Yes, he performed his prologue like a child plays a recorder—he can make sounds, but they’re out of control.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 6**THESEUS**

His speech was like a tangled chain. Nothing impaired, but all

THESEUS

His speech was like a tangled chain. It went on and on and was a total mess. Who’s next?

Original Text

disordered. Who is next?

Enter **BOTTOM** as **PYRAMUS**,
and **FLUTE** as **THISBE**,
and **SNOUT** as **WALL**,
and **STARVELING** as **MOONSHIN**
E, and **SNUG** as **LION**

PROLOGUE

(delivered by QUINCE)

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.

But wonder on, till truth make all
12 things plain.

5 This man is Pyramus, if you would know.

This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.

This man, with lime and
13 roughcast, doth present

0 Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.

And through Wall’s chink, poor souls, they are content

13 To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

5 This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine. For, if you will know,

14 By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

0 To meet at Ninus’ tomb—there, there to woo.

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

14 The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,

5 Did scare away, or rather did affright.

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

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

And finds his trusty Thisbe’s mantle slain.

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.

And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and

Modern Text

BOTTOM enters as **PYRAMUS**,
with **FLUTE** as **THISBE**, **SNOUT** as **WALL**, **STARVELING** as **MOONSHINE**, and **SNUG** as **LION**.

PROLOGUE

(delivered by QUINCE) Ladies and gentlemen, perhaps you are

wondering what is going on. Well, keep wondering, until the truth makes everything clear. This man is Pyramus, if you want to know. This

beautiful lady is definitely Thisbe. This man with the limestone and cement is portraying Wall, that horrible wall that kept these lovers apart.

They are content to whisper through Wall’s little hole, the poor souls, and no one should be surprised. This man, with his lantern, dog, and

thornbush, portrays Moonshine, because, if you want to know, the lovers were not ashamed to meet each other by moonshine at Ninus’s

tomb in order to carry on their courtship. This grisly beast, which is called “Lion,” scared away, or rather frightened, the faithful Thisbe

when she arrived at the meeting place at night. As she ran away from him, she dropped her cloak, which the horrible Lion stained with his

bloody mouth. Soon Pyramus comes along, a tall and handsome young man, and finds his faithful Thisbe’s cloak to be dead. At this point, he

takes his sword, his bloody blameful blade, and bravely breaks open his boiling bloody breast. And Thisbe, hiding in the shade of the

mulberry bushes, took his dagger and killed herself. For the rest of the story, let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and the two lovers talk more about it,

since they’re standing here.

Original Text

lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they
do remain.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 7

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion be to speak.

DEMETRIUS

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

*Exeunt PROLOGUE, PYRAMUS, THISBE, LION,
and MOONSHINE*

WALL

(played by SNOOT) In this same interlude it doth
150 befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall.
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole, or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
155 Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall. The truth is so.
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

DEMETRIUS

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

Enter PYRAMUS

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence!

PYRAMUS

(played by BOTTOM)
O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!
165 O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night! Alack, alack, alack,

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 8

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.
170 Thou Wall, O Wall, O sweet and lovely Wall,
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne!

WALL holds up fingers as chink

Thanks, courteous Wall. Jove shield thee well for
this!
But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.
175 O wicked Wall through whom I see no bliss!

Modern Text

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion’s going to talk.

DEMETRIUS

It wouldn’t surprise me, my lord. If these asses
can speak, a lion should be able to.

*PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION,
and MOONSHINE exit.*

WALL

(played by SNOOT) At this point I, Snout, play a
wall. But not just any wall. I want you to
understand that I’m pretending to be a kind of
wall that has a little hole in it. The lovers
Pyramus and Thisbe often whispered very
secretly through that hole. This clay, this cement,
and this stone that I’m carrying around show that
I’m that wall. It’s the truth. And this is the crack,
right side and left side *(points with two fingers)*,
through which the frightened lovers will be
whispering.

THESEUS

Can you imagine cement and stone talking
better?

DEMETRIUS

It’s the smartest partition I’ve ever heard speak,
my lord.

PYRAMUS enters.

THESEUS

Pyramus is coming up to the wall. Be quiet!

PYRAMUS

(played by BOTTOM) Oh, grim-looking night!
Oh, night that is so black in color! Oh night,
which is always there when it is not day! Oh
night! Oh night! So sad, sad, sad,

I’m afraid my Thisbe has forgotten her
promise!—And you, oh Wall, oh sweet, oh lovely
Wall, you stand between her father’s property
and mine, you Wall, oh Wall, oh sweet and lovely
Wall. Show me your hole to stick my eye up
against!

WALL holds up two fingers

Thank you, you’re such a polite wall. God bless
you for doing this. But what’s this I see? I don’t
see any Thisbe. Oh wicked wall, through which I
don’t see any happiness! Damn your stones for

Original Text

Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS

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

BOTTOM

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

Enter THISBE

THISBE

(played by FLUTE)

O Wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!

My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,
185 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.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 9**PYRAMUS**

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover’s grace.
190 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

195 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.

Exeunt PYRAMUS and THISBE

WALL

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

Exit WALL

Modern Text

disappointing me like this!

THESEUS

Since the wall is conscious, it should curse back at him.

BOTTOM

(out of character) No, actually, sir, he shouldn’t say anything. It’s not his turn, it’s Thisbe’s. “Disappointing me like this” is Thisbe’s cue. She’s supposed to enter now, and I’ll see her through the wall. You’ll see, it’ll happen exactly like I say. Here she comes.

THISBE enters.

THISBE

(played by FLUTE) Oh wall, you’ve often heard me moaning because you keep me separated from my handsome Pyramus! My cherry lips have often kissed your bricks, which are stuck together with cement.

PYRAMUS

I see a voice! I’ll go to the hole to see if I can hear my Thisbe’s face. Thisbe?

THISBE

You are my love, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

I’m your love, no matter what you think. And I’m still faithful to you, just like the famous [Limander](#).

THISBE

And I’ll be as faithful to you as [Helen of Troy](#), until the day I die.

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

Me too, I’m as faithful as [Shafalus to Procrus](#).

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

But I’m only kissing the wall’s hole, not your lips at all.

PYRAMUS

Will you meet me right away at Ninny’s grave?

THISBE

Neither death nor life will stop me from coming.

PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.

WALL

I, Wall, have done my part. Now that I’m done, Wall can go away.

WALL exits.

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 10

THESEUS

200 Now is the mural 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

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

Enter LION and MOONSHINE

LION

(played by SNUG)

You, ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear

210 The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion’s dam.

215 For if I should as lion come in strife
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.

THESEUS

The lovers should’ve waited around a little longer—the wall between them is down now.

DEMETRIUS

What can you do? That’s what happens with talking walls.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest thing I’ve ever seen.

THESEUS

The best plays are still only illusions, and the worst are just as good, if you just use your imagination to fill them in.

HIPPOLYTA

In that case it’s your imagination that’s interesting, not the play.

THESEUS

If we imagine these guys as they imagine themselves, then they’re first-class actors. Look, here come two noble animals, a man and a lion.

LION and MOONSHINE enter.

LION

(played by SNUG) You, ladies, whose gentle hearts make you afraid of the smallest monstrous mouse that crawls around on the floor, might quake and tremble now when the wild lion roars in his most violent rage. You should know that I, Snug the carpenter, am not a fierce lion or a lioness, because if I were a lion and I showed up here to cause trouble, I’d be taking my life in my hands.

THESEUS

Ah, it’s a sensitive animal, with a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

He’s the best actor I’ve ever seen play a lion.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 11

LYSANDER

This lion is a very fox, for his valor.

THESEUS

220 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**LYSANDER**

He’s as brave as a fox.

THESEUS

True. And as wise as a goose.

DEMETRIUS

Oh, that’s not true, my lord. He’s not brave enough to be wise.

THESEUS

He’s not wise enough to be brave. Anyway, he is what he is. Let’s listen to the moon.

MOONSHINE

Original Text*(played by STARVELING)*

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present—

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

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

MOONSHINE

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

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

HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change!

THESEUS

It appears by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane. But yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 12**LYSANDER**

Proceed, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thornbush, my thornbush; and this dog, my dog.

DEMETRIUS

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

*Enter THISBE***THISBE**

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

LION*(roaring)* Oh!*THISBE runs off, dropping her mantle***DEMETRIUS**

Well roared, Lion!

THESEUS

250 Well run, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

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

*LION bloodies THISBE’s mantle***Modern Text**This lantern represents the **horned moon**—**DEMETRIUS**He should have worn the **horns on his head**.**THESEUS**

He’s not a crescent moon, so his horns must be invisible inside the circle.

MOONSHINE

This lantern represents the moon. I myself am playing the man in the moon—

THESEUS

Well then, that’s the biggest mistake of all. The man should be inside the lantern. How else is he the “man in the moon”?

DEMETRIUS

He can’t go in there because of the candle. It’s too hot.

HIPPOLYTA

I’m tired of this moon. I wish he’d wax or wane off the stage.

THESEUS

It seems like he’s waning, but out of politeness we’ll have to wait and see.

LYSANDER

Go ahead, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All I wanted to tell you is that the lantern is the moon, I’m the man in the moon, this thornbush is my thornbush, and this dog is my dog.

DEMETRIUS

Well, all of these should be in the lantern, because they’re all in the moon. But be quiet, here comes Thisbe.

*THISBE enters.***THISBE**

This is old Ninny’s tomb. But where is my love?

LION*(roaring)* Hey!*THISBE runs off, dropping her cloak.***DEMETRIUS**

Good roaring, Lion!

THESEUS

Good running, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

Good shining, Moon!—Really, the Moon shines very well.

LION shakes THISBE’s cloak around and stains

Original Text

Modern Text

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion!

THESEUS

That’s good, Lion! Shake it around like a cat with a mouse.

*it with blood.**Enter PYRAMUS**PYRAMUS enters.*

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 13

DEMETRIUS

And then came Pyramus.

DEMETRIUS

And then Pyramus showed up.

*Exit LION**LION exits.***LYSANDER**

And so the lion vanished.

LYSANDER

So the lion disappeared.

PYRAMUS

255 Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright.
For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.—
But stay, O spite!

260 But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!

265 Thy mantle good,
What, stained with blood?
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum.

270 Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

THESEUS

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

THESEUS

You could get sad watching this actor’s passionate lament—if one of your good friends happened to die right at the same time.

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

HIPPOLYTA

Damned if I don’t feel sorry for him.

PYRAMUS

O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?

275 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!

280 Out, sword, and wound!
The pap of Pyramus—

PYRAMUS

Oh, Mother Nature, why did you create lions? A mean and awful lion has **deflowered** my darling, who is—no, no, who was the most beautiful lady who ever lived, or loved, or liked, or looked. Come on, tears, pour over me! Come on out, sword, and wound Pyramus in the chest—yes, right here on the left side where his heart is. (PYRAMUS *stabs himself*)

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 14

Ay, that left pap
Where heart doth hop. (*stabs himself*)
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

Now am I dead.

285 Now am I fled.

And so I’m dying. Here I go, here I go. Okay, now I’m dead. My soul has fled to the sky. My tongue shall see no more, It’s time for the moon to go away.

Original Text

My soul is in the sky.
Tongue, lose thy light.
Moon, take thy flight.

Exit MOONSHINE

290 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

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

Enter THISBE

HIPPOLYTA

300 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.

Modern Text

MOONSHINE exits.

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

DEMETRIUS

Is someone throwing dice? I guess it’s “die,” not dice, since there’s only one of him.

LYSANDER

Actually he’s a die with no dots, since he’s nothing—he’s dead.

THESEUS

With a doctor’s help he might recover and become an ass again.

HIPPOLYTA

If Moonshine’s gone before Thisbe comes back, how will she be able to see in the dark to find her lover dead?

THESEUS

She’ll see him by starlight. Here she comes. Her moaning and groaning will end the play.

THISBE enters.

HIPPOLYTA

I don’t think a ridiculous Pyramus like that one deserves much moaning. I hope she keeps it short.

DEMETRIUS

I can’t decide whether Pyramus or Thisbe is better. God help us if he’s a better man. But God help us if she’s a better woman.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 15

LYSANDER

305 She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

DEMETRIUS

And thus she means, videlicet—

THISBE

Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!

310 Speak, speak. Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,

315 These yellow cowslip cheeks

Are gone, are gone.
Lovers, make moan.
His eyes were green as leeks.

LYSANDER

Look, she’s spotted him with those sweet eyes of hers.

DEMETRIUS

And now she’ll start moaning, of course—

THISBE

Are you asleep, my love? What, are you dead, my dove? Oh, Pyramus, get up! Speak, speak. Can’t you talk? Dead, dead? The dirt of a grave must cover your sweet eyes! Your lily-white lips, your cherry-red nose, and your buttercup-yellow cheeks are gone, gone forever. Lovers, moan and weep. His eyes were as green as leeks. Oh, Fate, come, come to me, with hands as pale as milk. Soak your hands in blood and gore, since you have cut the thread of his life with scissors. Tongue, do not speak. Come, trusty sword. Come, blade, drench my breast with blood. (*she*)

Original Text

O Sisters three,
 320 Come, come to me
 With hands as pale as milk.
 Lay them in gore,
 Since you have shore
 With shears his thread of silk.
 325 Tongue, not a word.
 Come, trusty sword.
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue. (*stabs herself*)
 And, farewell, friends.
 Thus Thisbe ends.
 330 Adieu, adieu, adieu.
 (*dies*)

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

Modern Text

stabs herself) Goodbye, friends! This is how
 Thisbe comes to an end. Goodbye, goodbye,
 goodbye. (*THISBE dies*)

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Yes, and Wall too.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 16

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.

Bergomask dance
 Exeunt **BOTTOM** and **FLUTE**

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.
 Lovers, to bed. ’Tis almost fairy time.
 345 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,
 350 In nightly revels and new jollity.

Exeunt
 Enter **ROBIN**

ROBIN

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,

BOTTOM

(out of character) No, I assure you. The wall that
 kept their fathers apart has been taken down.
 Would you like to see the epilogue or hear a
 country dance between two of us?

THESEUS

No epilogue, please. Your play doesn’t need to
 be excused afterward with an epilogue. Never
 apologize—when the actors are all dead, no one
 can be blamed. As a matter of fact, if the
 playwright had played Pyramus and hanged
 himself with Thisbe’s belt, it would have been a
 very good tragedy. It’s a good tragedy, very well
 done. But come on, let’s see you do your dance.
 Forget your epilogue.

The actors dance, and BOTTOM and FLUTE exit.

The clock has chimed midnight. Lovers, it’s time
 to go to bed. It’s almost fairy time. I’m afraid
 we’re going to oversleep in the morning as late
 as we’ve stayed up tonight. This blatantly stupid
 play helped us kill the time until bed. Dear
 friends, let’s go to bed. We’ll continue this
 celebration for two weeks, with nightly parties
 and new fun.

They all exit.
ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Now the hungry lion roars and the wolf howls at
 the moon. The farmer snores, exhausted from
 his work. The charred logs glow in the fireplace,
 and the owl’s hoot makes the sick man think
 about his own death. Now is the time of night

Original Text

Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
 Puts the wretch that lies in woe
 In remembrance of a shroud.
 Now it is the time of night
 That the graves all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite,
 In the churchway paths to glide.

Modern Text

when graves open wide and release spirits to
 glide over the graveyard paths.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 17

And we fairies, that do run
 By the triple Hecate’s team
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic. Not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallowed house.
 I am sent with broom before
 To sweep the dust behind the door.

*Enter OBERON and TITANIA, King and Queen of
 Fairies, with all their train*

OBERON

Through the house give glimmering light,
 By the dead and drowsy fire.
 Every elf and fairy sprite
 Hop as light as bird from brier.
 355 And this ditty, after me,
 Sing and dance it trippingly.

TITANIA

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

*OBERON, TITANIA, and the FAIRIES sing and
 dance*

OBERON

(sings)
 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
 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.

And we fairies, who run away from the sun just
 like the goddess of the night, following darkness
 like a dream, are getting antsy. But I’m here to
 make sure that not even a mouse disturbs this
 blessed house. I’ve been sent to clean house a
 bit before the fairies come.

*OBERON and TITANIA enter with their servants
 and followers.*

OBERON

Let the dying fire shine a glimmering light
 throughout the house. I want every elf and fairy
 to hop lightly, like a bird on a twig, and to sing
 and dance this song along with me.

TITANIA

First rehearse your song from memory, and
 make sure each note is pretty. We’ll all join
 hands and sing, and bless this place with our
 fairy grace.

*OBERON and TITANIA lead the FAIRIES in
 song and dance.*

OBERON

(singing)
 Now, until morning, each fairy should walk
 through this house. Titania and I will go to the
 royal marriage bed to bless it, and the children
 conceived in that bed will always have good luck.
 Each of the three couples will always be faithful
 and in love, and their children will have no
 deformities.

Act 5, Scene 1, Page 18

Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are
 Despisèd in nativity,
 Shall upon their children be.
 With this field dew consecrate,

They won’t have moles, or harelips, or scars, or
 abnormal markings, or anything else that might
 alarm someone if their baby was born with it. Use
 this blessed dew from the fields to bless each
 room in the palace with sweet peace. And the

Original Text

*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.
 Trip away. Make no stay.
 Meet me all by break of day.*

*Exeunt all but **ROBIN***

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this, and all is mended—
 That you have but slumbered here
 While these visions did appear.
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream,
 Gentles, do not reprehend.
 If you pardon, we will mend.
 And, as I am an honest Puck,
 If we have unearnèd luck
 Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
 We will make amends ere long.
 Else the Puck a liar call.
 So good night unto you all.
 Give me your hands if we be friends,
 And Robin shall restore amends.

Exit

Modern Text

*blessed owner will always be safe. Run along.
 Don't stay long. Meet me at dawn.*

*They all exit except for **ROBIN**.*

ROBIN

If we actors have offended you, just think of it this way and everything will be all right—you were asleep when you saw these visions, and this silly and pathetic story was no more real than a dream. Ladies and gentlemen, don't get upset with me. If you forgive us, we'll make everything all right. I'm an honest Puck, and I swear that if we're lucky enough not to get hissed at, we'll make it up to you soon. If not, then I'm a liar. So good night to everyone. Give me some applause, if we're friends, and Robin will make everything up to you.

He exits.