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The Necessary Shakespeare

Fourth Edition



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Edited by

David Bevington

The University of Chicago

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A Midsummer Night's Dream



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One of the many astonishing achievements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1594–1595) is its development of the motif of love as an imaginative journey from a world of social conflict into a fantasy world created by the artist, ending in a return to a reality that has itself been partly transformed by the experience of the journey. As the lovers in this play flee from the Athenian law to lose themselves in the forest, they reveal and discover in themselves the simultaneously hilarious and horrifying effects of sexual desire. Moreover, their journey suggests the extent to which love or desire is itself an act of imagination, not unlike the imagination that underlies the creation of art. The fifth act especially invites us to see theatrical experience as like a dream, at times nightmarish but at its best an emancipating foray into an imagined space wholly beyond the realm of ordinary human happenings. Shakespeare gives us an earlier hint of an imaginary sylvan landscape in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but not until *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the idea fully realized. The motif of contrasting worlds, one of social convention and the other of visionary fantasy, will remain an enduring preoccupation of Shakespeare to the very last. This visionary world haunts the imagination with some of the most poetic passages of the entire Shakespeare canon, from Titania's evocation of her bond of affection with her votaress "in the spiced Indian air by night" (2.1.123–37) to Oberon's memory of a mermaid singing on a dolphin's back (2.1.150–4). Containing the highest percentage of rhymed verse in all of Shakespeare's plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* calls attention to the seemingly magical capacity of words to weave spells not only on the characters but on the audience as well.

In construction, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a skillful interweaving of four plots involving four groups of characters: the court party of Theseus, the four young lovers, the fairies, and the "rude mechanicals" or would-be actors. Felix Mendelssohn's incidental music for the

play evokes the contrasting textures of the various groups: Theseus's hunting horns and ceremonial wedding marches, the lovers' soaring and throbbing melodies, the fairies' pianissimo staccato, the tradesmen's clownish bassoon. Moreover, each plot is derived from its own set of source materials. The action involving Theseus and Hippolyta, for example, owes several details to Thomas North's translation (1579) of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, to Chaucer's *Knights Tale* and perhaps to his *Legend of Good Women*, and to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (in the Latin text or in Arthur Golding's popular Elizabethan translation). The lovers' story, meanwhile, is Italianate and Ovidian in tone and also, in the broadest sense, follows the conventions of plot in Plautus's and Terence's Roman comedies, although no particular source is known. Shakespeare's rich fairy lore, by contrast, is part folk tradition and part learned. For some of his material he seems to have turned to written sources, such as the French romance *Huon of Bordeaux* (translated into English by 1540), Robert Greene's play *James IV* (c. 1591), and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, II.i.8 (1590). Similarly, he may have taken Titania's name from the *Metamorphoses*, where it is used as an epithet for both Diana and Circe. At the same time, in his creation of Mustardseed, Cobweb, Mote, and Peaseblossom, Shakespeare also pays homage to a rich body of unwritten sources that are, for the most part, no longer accessible. Changeling children, mortals kidnapped by fairy queens, men transformed to beasts by evil spells: these were the stuff of oral tales circulated by firesides on winter nights. Finally, for Bottom the weaver and company, Shakespeare's primary inspiration was doubtless his own theatrical experience, although even here he is indebted to Ovid for the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and probably to Apuleius's *Golden Ass* (translated by William Adlington, 1566) for Bottom's transformation.

Each of the four main plots in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains one or more pairs of lovers whose

happiness has been frustrated by misunderstanding or parental opposition. Theseus and Hippolyta, once enemies in battle, become husband and wife; their court marriage, constituting the overplot of the play, provides a framework for other dramatic actions that similarly oscillate between conflict and harmony. In fact, Theseus's actions are instrumental in setting in motion and finally resolving the tribulations of the other characters. In the beginning of the play, for example, the lovers flee from Theseus's Athenian law; at the end, they are awakened by him from their dream. As the king and queen of fairies come to Athens to celebrate Theseus's wedding, they exchange jealous accusations: Oberon accuses his queen of being overly partial to Theseus, while she is critical of Oberon's attentions to Hippolyta. These plots of the Athenian and the fairy monarchs are drawn even more closely together by the common practice in today's theater of doubling the parts of Theseus and Oberon, Hippolyta and Titania (also, frequently, Philostrate and Puck). The broadly comic action of Bottom the Weaver and his companions is drawn into the overall design by means of their deciding to use the forest of Athens as the place where they will rehearse their performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe" in anticipation of the wedding festivities.

The tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisbe, although it seems absurdly ill suited to a wedding, reminds us of the discord and potentially fatal misunderstandings that threaten even the best of relationships between men and women. For all his graceful bearing and princely authority, Theseus is a conquering male who freely admits that he has won the love of Hippolyta with his sword, doing her "injuries" (1.1.17). He never questions that the accord between them should now be stated in terms of male ascendancy over the female. The Amazonian Hippolyta may accept with good grace the marriage she previously resisted with all her might, like Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and yet, in many recent stage productions, the actress playing Hippolyta has found it easy to cast doubt on the presumed tranquility of this forthcoming marriage by a display of feminist impatience at Theseus's urbanely patriarchal ways. The reconciliation of Oberon and Titania, meanwhile, reinforces the hierarchy of male over female in no uncertain terms. Having taught Titania a lesson for trying to keep a changeling boy from him, Oberon relents and eventually frees Titania from her debasing enchantment. She does not reproach him with so much as a word when she is awakened from her "vision." Even so, the very existence of the abundantly female space of Titania's bower where, surrounded by her attendants, she has acted out desires that she thought were her own, poses an alternative to patriarchy. The four young lovers end up happily paired, but only after they have experienced rejection, rivalry, hatred, and the desire to kill; the final resolution of this plot would not be possible if Demetrius were not left under the spell of the fairy love-

juice. Thus, Theseus's wedding provides a ceremonial occasion of harmony and reconciliation but in such a way as to highlight the difficulties that have beset the drama's various couples.

Despite Theseus's cheerful preoccupation with marriage, his court embodies at first a stern attitude toward young love. As administrator of the law, Theseus must accede to the remorseless demands of Hermia's father, Egeus. The inflexible Athenian law sides with parentage, age, male dominance, wealth, and position against youth and romantic choice in love. The penalties are harsh: death or perpetual virginity—and virginity is presented in this comedy (despite the nobly chaste examples of Christ, St. Paul, and Queen Elizabeth) as a fate worse than death. Egeus is a familiar type, the interfering parent found in the Roman comedy of Plautus and Terence (and in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*). Indeed, the lovers' story is distantly derived from Roman comedy, which conventionally celebrated the triumph of young love over the machinations of age and wealth. Lysander reminds us that "the course of true love never did run smooth," and he sees its enemies as being chiefly external: the conflicting interests of parents or friends; mismatching with respect to years and blood, war, death, or sickness (1.1.134–42). This description clearly applies to "Pyramus and Thisbe," and it is tested by the action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a whole (as well as by other early Shakespearean plays, such as *Romeo and Juliet*). The archetypal story, whether ending happily or sadly, is an evocation of love's difficulties in the face of social hostility and indifference.

While Shakespeare uses several elements of Roman comedy in setting up the basic conflicts of his drama, he also introduces important modifications from the beginning. For example, he discards one conventional confrontation of classical and neoclassical comedy, in which the heroine must choose between an old, wealthy suitor supported by her family and the young but impecunious darling of her heart. Lysander is equal to his rival in social position, income, and attractiveness. Egeus's demand, therefore—that Hermia marry Demetrius rather than Lysander—seems simply arbitrary and unjust. Shakespeare emphasizes in this way the irrationality of Egeus's harsh insistence on being obeyed and of Theseus's rather complacent acceptance of the law's inequity. Spurned by an unfeeling social order, Lysander and Hermia are compelled to elope. To be sure, in the end Egeus proves to be no formidable threat; even he must admit the logic of permitting the lovers to couple as they ultimately desire. Thus, the obstacles to love are seen from the start as fundamentally superficial and indeed almost whimsical. Egeus is as heavy a villain as we are likely to find in this *jeu d'esprit*. Moreover, the very irrationality of his position prepares the way for an ultimate resolution of the conflict. Nevertheless, by the end of the first act, the supposedly rational world of

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conformity and duty, by its customary insensitivity to youthful happiness, has set in motion a temporary escape to a fantasy world where the law cannot reach.

In the forest, all the lovers—including Titania and Bottom—undergo a transforming experience engineered by the mischievous Puck. This experience demonstrates the universal power of love, which can overcome the queen of fairies as readily as the lowliest of humans. It also suggests the irrational nature of love and its affinity to enchantment, witchcraft, and even madness. Love is seen as an affliction taken in through the frail senses, particularly the eyes. When it strikes, the victim cannot choose but to embrace the object of his or her infatuation. By his amusing miscalculations, Puck shuffles the four lovers through various permutations with mathematical predictability. First, two gentlemen compete for one lady, leaving the second lady sadly unrequited in love; then everything is at cross-purposes, with each gentleman pursuing the lady who is in love with the other man; then the two gentlemen compete for the lady they both previously ignored. Finally, of course, Jack shall have his Jill—whom else should he have? The couples are properly united, as they evidently were at some time prior to the commencement of the play, when Demetrius had been romantically attached to Helena and Lysander to Hermia.

Their experience in the forest is an unsettling one for the four young lovers. Although some of them seek out the forest as a refuge from the Athenian law, the place rapidly takes on the darker aspect of a nightmare. Hermia awakens from sleep to find Lysander gone and soon discovers that her dream of a serpent eating her heart away while Lysander watches smiling (2.2.155–6) is all too prophetically true. The forest is a place of testing of the lovers, and the test appears at first to show how they are all their own worst enemies. Helena, having been rejected by Demetrius, can only suppose that she is being mocked, with Lysander and Demetrius both paying court to her. Next, it occurs to her that Hermia must be part of their conspiracy, too. Even though Hermia and Helena recall to each other the selfless devotion they have known as young friends, they become hated rivals in their present mood of self-pity and injured self-regard. The threshold of sexual awakening, it would seem, confronts them with a hazardous rite of passage—one that is especially threatening to the nonsexual friendship of their adolescent years. The two young men respond to similar conflicts by turning on one another in characteristically aggressive male ways. Puck allows them to playact their intended mayhem in a way that cannot harm them and then brings all four lovers together where they can awaken from their nightmare of imagined persecution. How much do they remember? Have they been changed by their journey in the forest? The lovers convey a sense of confusion, of an unreconciled dissonance of perspective in which “everything seems double” (4.1.189). As the

lovers return to the daylight world of Athens and the court, their experiences assume the unreality of a remembered dream, like “far-off mountains turnèd into clouds” (4.1.187). When they thus awaken and return to the daylight world of Athens and the court, their renewed love and friendship are presumably deepened by their perception of how narrowly they have escaped from their own self-destructive imaginings. Their new happiness, they see, is better than they have deserved.

We sense that Puck is by no means unhappy about his knavish errors and manipulations: “Lord, what fools these mortals be!” (3.2.115). Along with the other fairies in this play, Puck takes his being and his complex motivation from many denizens of the invisible world. As the agent of all-powerful love, Puck compares himself to Cupid. The love juice he administers comes from Cupid’s flower, “love-in-idleness.” Like Cupid, Puck acts at the behest of the gods, and yet he wields a power that the chiefest of the gods themselves cannot resist. Essentially, however, Puck is less a classical love deity than a prankish folk spirit, such as we find in every folklore: gremlin, leprechaun, hobgoblin, and the like. Titania’s fairies recognize Puck as the folk figure Robin Goodfellow, able to deprive a beer barrel of its yeast so that it spoils rather than ferments. Puck characterizes himself as a practical joker, pulling stools out from under old ladies.

Folk wisdom imagines the inexplicable and unaccountable events in life to be caused by invisible spirits who laugh at mortals’ discomfiture and mock them for mere sport. Puck is related to these mysterious spirits dwelling in nature, who must be placated with gifts and ceremonies. Although Shakespeare restricts Puck to a benign sportive role in dealing with the lovers or with Titania, the actual folk legends about Puck mentioned in this play are frequently disquieting. Puck is known to “mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm” (2.1.39); indeed, he demonstrates as much with Demetrius and Lysander, leading them on through the forest to the point of exhaustion, even though we perceive the sportful intent. At the play’s end, Puck links himself and his fellows with the ghoulish apparitions of death and night: wolves howling at the moon, screech owls, shrouds, gaping graves. Associations of this sort go beyond mere sportiveness to the witchcraft and demonology involving spirits rising from the dead. Even Oberon’s assurance that the fairies will bless all the marriages of this play, shielding their progeny against mole, harelip, or other birth defects, carries the implication that such misfortunes can be caused by offended spirits. The magic of this play is thus explicitly related to deep irrational powers and forces capable of doing great harm, although, to be sure, the spirit of comedy keeps such veiled threats safely at a distance in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Oberon and Titania, in their view of the relationship between gods and humans, reflect yet another aspect of

the fairies' spiritual ancestry. The king and queen of fairies assert that, because they are immortal, their regal quarrels in love must inevitably have dire consequences on earth, either in the love relationship of Theseus and Hippolyta or in the management of the weather. Floods, storms, diseases, and sterility abound, "And this same progeny of evils comes / From our debate, from our dis-sension. / We are their parents and original" (2.1.115–17). This motif of the gods' quarreling over human affairs reminds us of Homer and Virgil. At the same time, in this lighthearted play the motif is more nearly mock-epic than truly epic. The consequences of the gods' anger are simply mirth-provoking, most of all in Titania's love affair with Bottom the weaver.

The story of Bottom and Titania is simultaneously classical and folk in nature. In a playfully classical mode, this love affair between a god and an earthy creature underscores humanity's double nature. Bottom himself becomes half man and half beast, even if he is more ludicrously comic than the centaurs, satyrs, griffins, sphinxes, and other amphibious beings of classical mythology. Some ballads of the early modern period tell of humans transformed into beasts, or of mortals kidnapped by a fairy queen; see, for example, "Tam Lin" and "Thomas Rhymer." Bottom is an especially comic example of metamorphosis because he reverses the usual pattern of a human head and an animal body: instead, his head is animal, his body human. His very name suggests the solid nature of his fleshly being (*bottom* is appropriately also a weaving term). He and Titania represent the opposites of flesh and spirit, miraculously yoked for a time in a twofold vision of humankind's absurd and ethereal nature.

A play bringing together fairies and mortals inevitably raises questions of illusion and reality. These questions reach their greatest intensity in the presentation of "Pyramus and Thisbe." This play within a play focuses our attention on the familiarly Shakespearean metaphor of art as illusion and of the world itself as a stage on which men and women are merely players. As Theseus observes, apologizing for the ineptness of the tradesmen's performance, "the best in this kind are but shadows" (5.1.210); that is, Shakespeare's own play is of the same order of reality as Bottom's play. Puck too, in his epilogue, invites any spectator offended by Shakespeare's play to dismiss it as a mere dream—as, indeed, the play's very title suggests. Theseus goes even further, linking dream to the essence of imaginative art, although he does so in a clearly critical and rather patronizing way. The artist, he says, is like the maniac or the lover in his or her frenzy of inspiration, giving "to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name" (5.1.16–17). Artistic achievements are too unsubstantial for Theseus; from his point of view they are the products of mere fantasy and irrationality, mere myths or fairy stories or old wives' tales. Behind this critical persona defending the "real" world of his court, how-

ever, we can hear Shakespeare's characteristically self-effacing defense of "dreaming."

"Pyramus and Thisbe," like the larger play surrounding it, attempts to body forth "the forms of things unknown." The play within the play gives us personified moonshine, a speaking wall, and an apologetic lion. Of course, it is an absurdly bad play, full of lame epithets, bombastic alliteration, and bathos. In part, Shakespeare here is satirizing the abuses of a theater he had helped reform. The players' chosen method of portraying imaginative matters is ridiculous and calls forth deliciously wry comments from the courtly spectators on stage: "Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?" (5.1.164–5). At the same time, those spectators on stage are actors in our play. Their sarcasms render them less sympathetic in our eyes; we see that their kind of sophistication is as restrictive as it is illuminating. Bottom and his friends have conceived moonshine and lion as they did because these simple men are so responsive to the terrifying power of art. A lion might frighten the ladies and get the men hanged. Theirs is a primitive faith, naive but strong, and in this sense it contrasts favorably with the jaded rationality of the court party. Theseus's valuable reminder that all art is only "illusion" is thus juxtaposed with Bottom's insistence that imaginative art has a reality of its own.

Theseus above all embodies the sophistication of the court in his description of art as a frenzy of seething brains. Ironically, Theseus's genial scoffing at "These antique fables" and "these fairy toys" (5.1.3) would seem to efface his own identity as the figure of legend. Limited by his own skepticism, Theseus seems to have forgotten his own forest wanderings, led by Titania through the "glimmering night" (2.1.77). Bottom, contrastingly, has experienced "a most rare vision," such a dream as is "past the wit of man to say what dream it was" (4.1.203–5). He alone can claim to have been the lover of the queen of fairies; and, although his language cannot adequately describe the experience, Bottom will see it made into a ballad called "Bottom's Dream." Shakespeare leaves the status of his fantasy world deliberately complex; Theseus's lofty denial of dreaming is too abrupt. Even if the Athenian forest world can be made only momentarily substantial in the artifact of Shakespeare's play, we as audience respond to its tantalizing vision. We emerge back into our lives wondering if the fairies were "real"; that is, we are puzzled by the relationship of these artistic symbols to the tangible concreteness of our daily existence. Unless our perceptions have been thus enlarged by sharing in the author's dream, we have not surrendered to the imaginative experience.

Recent performances of this enduringly popular play suggest how open it is to varying interpretation and especially to postmodern views of love and politics as thoroughly unsettling in their irrationality. Nineteenth-century

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staging generally preferred to see the play as a gossamer delight of diminutive gilded-winged fairies and prankish hobgoblins, all underscored by the romantic strains of Mendelssohn's incidental music. More recently, and especially after World War II, theater and film versions have responded to a darker view. Inspired by Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964), a book written from the perspective of Soviet-dominated eastern Europe of the Cold War, Peter Brook's brilliantly revisionary stage version for the Royal Shakespeare Theater in 1970 set the play in a brightly lit white box peopled with jugglers and athletic trapeze artists who tumbled and dashed about after one another with abandon. A fisted arm thrust between the legs of Bottom the Weaver as he was carried off stage from his rendezvous with Queen Titania suggested a triumphant phallus.

Brook's avowed aim of freeing the play from what he saw as an oppressive tradition has proved to be immensely influential. Ever since, the young lovers have learned to express their sexual energies through vigorous

pursuit and physical contact. Feminist insights have enriched the role of Queen Hippolyta: formerly a captive queen resigned to her marriage to Theseus, she has become in many productions a champion of Hermia's right to resist her father's patriarchal insistence on his will. Puck, in many a recent production, is the denizen of a drug culture, with the love potion as the weed he gleefully distributes. The experience of the forest becomes a drug-induced "high," for audiences as for the actors. The fairies, sometimes played by adult and hairy males, can exhibit a steak of cruelty. The doubling of some central roles, notably Theseus/Oberon, Hippolyta/Titania, and Philostrate/Puck, has given ironic emphasis to parallels between human society and fairyland. Throughout, modern productions have tended to exploit disenchantment with traditional social structures and the surging energy of sexual self-discovery. These modern interpretations are arguably neither more nor less "true" to Shakespeare's text than earlier or more "traditional" versions. What they do demonstrate is the play's remarkable permeability and openness to differing views.

A Midsummer Night's Dream



[Dramatis Personae

THESEUS, *Duke of Athens*

HIPPOLYTA, *Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus*
 PHILOSTRATE, *Master of the Revels*
 EGEUS, *father of Hermia*

HERMIA, *daughter of Egeus, in love with Lysander*
 LYSANDER, *in love with Hermia*
 DEMETRIUS, *in love with Hermia and favored
 by Egeus*
 HELENA, *in love with Demetrius*

OBERON, *King of the Fairies*
 TITANIA, *Queen of the Fairies*
 PUCK, *or* ROBIN GOODFELLOW

PEASEBLOSSOM,
 COBWEB,
 MOTE,
 MUSTARDSEED,
 Other FAIRIES attending

} *fairies attending Titania*

PETER QUINCE, *a carpenter,*
 NICK BOTTOM, *a weaver,*
 FRANCIS FLUTE, *a bellows
 mender,*
 TOM SNOOT, *a tinker,*
 SNUG, *a joiner,*
 ROBIN STARVELING, *a tailor,*

} *representing* { PROLOGUE
 PYRAMUS
 THISBE
 WALL
 LION
 MOONSHINE

Lords and Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta

SCENE: *Athens, and a wood near it*

[1.1]

*Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, [and Philostrate,]
with others.*

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

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

[Exit Philostrate.]

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

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

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renownèd duke!

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander.—And, my gracious Duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.—
Thou, thou Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchanged love tokens with my child.
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,

1.1. Location: Athens. Theseus's court.

4 **lingers** frustrates 5 **stepdame** stepmother. a **dowager** i.e., a widow (whose right of inheritance from her dead husband is eating into her son's estate) 6 **withering out** causing to dwindle 7 **Four . . . night** (The image is of the day sinking into the ocean as night comes on.) 11 **solemnities** festive ceremonies of marriage. 15 **companion** fellow. (A pale complexion is linked to melancholy.) **pomp** ceremonial magnificence. 16 **with my sword** i.e., in a military engagement against the Amazons, when Hippolyta was taken captive 19 **triumph** public festivity 31 **feigning** (1) counterfeiting (2) faining, desirous 32 **And . . . fantasy** and made her fall in love with you (imprinting your image on her imagination) by stealthy and dishonest means 33 **gauds, conceits** playthings, fanciful trifles

Knacks, trifles, nose-gays, sweetmeats—messengers 34
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth. 35
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 39
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 your law
Immediately provided in that case. 45

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.
To you your father should be as a god—
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it. 51
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier. 54

HERMIA

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA

I do entreat Your Grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech Your Grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS

Either to die the death or to abjure 65
Forever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
Know of your youth, examine well your blood, 68
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun, 70
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd, 71
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice blessèd they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled 76
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

34 **Knacks . . . sweetmeats** knickknacks, trinkets, bouquets, candies
35 **prevailment in influence on** 39 **Be it so if** 45 **Immediately**
directly, with nothing intervening 51 **leave** i.e., leave unaltered
54 **kind** respect. **wanting** lacking. **voice** approval 65 **die the**
death be executed by legal process 68 **blood** passions 70 **livery**
habit, costume 71 **aye** ever. **mew'd** shut in. (Said of a hawk, poul-
try, etc.) 76 **earthlier happy** happier as respects this world.
distilled i.e., to make perfume

HERMIA

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

THESEUS

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

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

EGEUS

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

LYSANDER

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

THESEUS

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

I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial, and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

EGEUS

With duty and desire we follow you.
Exeunt [all but Lysander and Hermia].

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

89 LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

L Oh, cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER

S Or else misgrafted in respect of years—

HERMIA

, Oh, spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

LYSANDER

98 **U** Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

HERMIA

S Oh, hell, to choose love by another's eyes!

100 LYSANDER

101 **H** Or if there were a sympathy in choice,

102 **A** War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,

Making it momentary as a sound,

Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,

Brief as the lightning in the collied night

106 **N** 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.

N So quick bright things come to confusion.

110 HERMIA

If then true lovers have been ever crossed,

It stands as an edict in destiny.

Then let us teach our trial patience,

113 **0** Because it is a customary cross,

As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,

Wishes, and tears, poor fancy's followers.

116 LYSANDER

117 **9** A good persuasion. Therefore, hear me, Hermia:

118 **B** I have a widow aunt, a dowager

Of great revenue, and she hath no child.

120 **U** From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;

And she respects me as her only son.

123 **125** Against in preparation for **126** nearly that that closely

130 Belike Very likely **131** Beteem grant, afford **135** blood heredi-

tary rank **136** cross vexation. **137** misgrafted ill grafted, badly

matched **139** friends relatives **141** sympathy agreement

143 momentary lasting but a moment **145** collied blackened (as

with coal dust), darkened **146** in a spleen in a swift impulse, in a

violent flash. **unfolds** reveals **149** confusion ruin. **150** ever

crossed always thwarted **152** teach . . . patience i.e., teach ourselves

patience in this trial **155** fancy's amorous passion's **156** persua-

sion doctrine. **159** seven leagues about 21 miles **160** respects

regards

80 patent privilege 89 protest vow 92 crazèd cracked, unsound
98 estate unto settle or bestow upon 99 as well derived as well born
and descended 100 possessed endowed with wealth 101 fairly
handsomely 102 vantage superiority 106 head i.e., face 110 spot-
ted i.e., morally stained 113 self-affairs my own concerns
116 schooling admonition 117 look you arm take care you prepare
118 fancies likings, thoughts of love 120 extenuate mitigate, relax
123 go i.e., come

There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee,
 And to that place the sharp Athenian law
 Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me, then,
 Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night;
 And in the wood, a league without the town,
 Where I did meet thee once with Helena
 To do observance to a morn of May,
 There will I stay for thee.

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

LYSANDER
 Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.
Enter Helena.

HERMIA
 God speed, fair Helena! Whither away?

HELENA
 Call you me fair? That "fair" again unsay.
 Demetrius loves your fair. Oh, happy fair!
 Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air
 More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear
 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
 Sickness is catching. Oh, were favor so,
 Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
 My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
 My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
 Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
 The rest I'd give to be to you translated.
 Oh, teach me how you look and with what art
 You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

HERMIA
 I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

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

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

HELENA
 Oh, that my prayers could such affection move! 197

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

165 HELENA
 The more I love, the more he hateth me.

167 HERMIA
 His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

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

170 HERMIA
 Take comfort. He no more shall see my face.
 Lysander and myself will fly this place.
 Before the time I did Lysander see 204
 Seemed Athens as a paradise to me. 205

171
 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 209
 Her silver visage in the watery glass,
 Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
 A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal, 210
 Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal. 211
 212

180 HERMIA
 And in the wood, where often you and I
 Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
 Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet, 215
 There my Lysander and myself shall meet,
 And thence from Athens turn away our eyes 216
 To seek new friends and stranger companies. 219
 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!
 As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! *Exit Lysander.*

8
 HELENA
 How happy some o'er other some can be! 226
 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
 But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
 He will not know what all but he do know.
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
 So I, admiring of his qualities.
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity. 232
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
 And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

165 without outside 167 To do . . . May to perform the ceremonies of May Day 170 best arrow (Cupid's best gold-pointed arrows were supposed to induce love; his blunt leaden arrows, aversion.) 171 simplicity innocence. doves i.e., those that drew Venus's chariot 173, 174 Carthage queen, false Trojan (Dido, Queen of Carthage, immolated herself on a funeral pyre after having been deserted by the Trojan hero Aeneas.) 180 fair fair-complexioned. (Generally regarded by the Elizabethans as more beautiful than a dark complexion.) 182 your fair your beauty (even though Hermia is dark complexioned). happy fair lucky fair one. 183 lodestars guiding stars. air music 184 tunable tuneful, melodious 186 favor appearance, looks 190 bated excepted 191 translated transformed. 193 sway the motion control the impulses

197 Oh, that . . . move! Would that my prayers could arouse such desire! 204–5 Before . . . to me (Love has led to complications and jealousies, making Athens hell for Hermia.) 209 Phoebe Diana, the moon 210 glass reflecting surface (of a lake, etc.) 211 liquid pearl i.e., dew 212 still always 215 faint pale 216 counsel secret thought 219 stranger companies the company of strangers. 226 o'er . . . can be can be in comparison to some others. 232 holding no quantity i.e., unsubstantial, unshapely

Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,
 Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
 So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
 For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
 He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolved, and 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.
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
 To have his sight thither and back again.

236 Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. 25
 237 "The raging rocks
 And shivering shocks
 239 Shall break the locks
 240 Of prison gates;
 And Phibbus' car
 242 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 condoling.
 QUINCE Francis Flute, the bellows mender.
 248 FLUTE Here, Peter Quince.
 249 QUINCE Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.
 FLUTE What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?
 QUINCE It is the lady that Pyramus must love.
 FLUTE Nay, faith, let not me play a woman. I have a
 beard coming.
 QUINCE That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and 43
 you may speak as small as you will. 44
 BOTTOM An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too. 45
 I'll speak in a monstrous little voice: "Thisne, Thisne!"
 "Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear! Thy Thisbe dear, and
 lady dear!"
 QUINCE No, no, you must play Pyramus, and Flute, you
 Thisbe.
 BOTTOM Well, proceed.
 QUINCE Robin Starveling, the tailor.
 STARVELING Here, Peter Quince.
 QUINCE Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's
 mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.
 SNOUT Here, Peter Quince.
 QUINCE You, Pyramus' father; myself, Thisbe's father;
 Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part; and I hope here is
 a play fitted.
 SNUG Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it
 be, give it me, for I am slow of study.
 QUINCE You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but
 roaring.
 BOTTOM Let me play the lion too. I will roar that I will
 do any man's heart good to hear me. I will roar that I
 will make the Duke say, "Let him roar again, let him
 roar again."
 QUINCE An you should do it too terribly, you would
 fright the Duchess and the ladies, that they would
 shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.
 ALL That would hang us, every mother's son.
 BOTTOM I grant you, friends, if you should fright the
 ladies out of their wits, they would have no more dis-
 cretion 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.

Exit.



[1.2]

Enter Quince the carpenter, and Snug the joiner, and Bottom the weaver, and Flute the bellows mender, and Snout the tinker, and Starveling the tailor.

QUINCE Is all our company here?
 BOTTOM You were best to call them generally, man by
 man, according to the scrip.
 QUINCE Here is the scroll of every man's name which
 is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our inter-
 lude before the Duke and the Duchess on his wedding
 day at night.
 BOTTOM First, good Peter Quince, say what the play
 treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so
 grow to a point.
 QUINCE Marry, our play is "The most lamentable com-
 edy 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. 16
 BOTTOM Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.
 QUINCE You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.
 BOTTOM What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?
 QUINCE A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.
 BOTTOM That will ask some tears in the true performing
 of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will
 move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the
 rest—yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play 23
 24

2 BOTTOM Well, proceed.
 3 QUINCE Robin Starveling, the tailor.
 STARVELING Here, Peter Quince.
 5 QUINCE Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's
 6 mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.
 SNOUT Here, Peter Quince.
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 10 a play fitted.
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 8 BOTTOM Let me play the lion too. I will roar that I will
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 will make the Duke say, "Let him roar again, let him
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 5 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.
 9 ALL That would hang us, every mother's son.
 9 BOTTOM I grant you, friends, if you should fright the
 23 ladies out of their wits, they would have no more dis-
 cretion but to hang us; but I will aggravate my voice
 74 so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I
 75 will roar you an 'twere any nightingale. 76

236 Nor . . . taste i.e., Nor has Love, which dwells in the fancy or imagination, any least bit of judgment or reason 237 figure signify 239 in choice in choosing. beguiled self-deluded, making unaccountable choices. 240 waggish playful, mischievous. game sport, jest 242 eyne eyes. (Old form of plural.) 248 intelligence information 249 a dear expense i.e., a trouble worth taking on my part. 1.2. Location: Athens. 2 generally (Bottom's blunder for "individually.") 3 scrip script. 5–6 interlude play 10 grow to come to 11 Marry (A mild oath; originally the name of the Virgin Mary.) 16 Bottom (As a weaver's term, a bottom was an object around which thread was wound.) 23 condole lament, arouse pity 24 humor inclination

25 Eracles Hercules. (The tradition of ranting came from Seneca's *Hercules Furens*.) tear a cat i.e., rant. make all split i.e., cause a stir, bring the house down. 30 Phibbus' car Phoebus's, the sun god's, chariot 43 That's all one It makes no difference. 44 small high-pitched 45 An If. (Also at line 68.) 74 aggravate (Bottom's blunder for "moderate.") 75 roar you i.e., roar for you. sucking dove (Bottom conflates *sitting dove* and *sucking lamb*, two proverbial images of innocence.) 76 an 'twere as if it were

QUINCE You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man, a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day, a most lovely gentlemanlike man. Therefore you must needs play Pyramus. 78

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

QUINCE Why, what you will.

BOTTOM I will discharge it in either your straw-color beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-color beard, your perfect yellow. 84 85 86

QUINCE Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts. [*He distributes parts.*] And I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you to con them by tomorrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There will we rehearse; for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not. 88 91 95 96

BOTTOM We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains, be perfect. Adieu. 99

QUINCE At the Duke's oak we meet.

BOTTOM Enough. Hold, or cut bowstrings. *Exeunt.* 102

[2.1]

Enter a Fairy at one door, and Robin Goodfellow [Puck] at another.

PUCK 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;

78 proper handsome 84 discharge perform. your i.e., you know the kind I mean 85 purple-in-grain dyed a very deep red. (From grain, the name applied to the dried insect used to make the dye.) 86 French-crown-color i.e., color of a French crown, a gold coin 88 crowns heads bald from syphilis, the "French disease" 91 con memorize 95 devices plans 96 draw a bill draw up a list 99 obscenely (An unintentionally funny blunder, whatever Bottom meant to say.) perfect i.e., letter-perfect in memorizing your parts. 102 Hold . . . bowstrings (An archers' expression, not definitely explained, but probably meaning here "keep your promises, or give up the play.") 2.1. Location: A wood near Athens. 3 Thorough through 4 pale enclosure 7 sphere orbit 9 dew sprinkle with dew. orbs circles, i.e., fairy rings (circular bands of grass, darker than the surrounding area, caused by fungi enriching the soil) 10 pensioners retainers, members of the royal bodyguard

Those be rubies, fairy favors; 12
In those freckles live their savors. 13
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. 16
Our Queen and all her elves come here anon. 17

PUCK The King doth keep his revels here tonight.
Take heed the Queen come not within his sight.
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling. 23
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there. 25 26 29 30

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

PUCK Thou speakest aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, 45
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal; 46
And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl 47
In very likeness of a roasted crab, 48
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale. 50
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale, 51

12 favors love tokens 13 savors sweet smells. 16 lob country bumpkin 17 anon at once. 20 passing fell exceedingly angry. wrath wrathful 23 changeling child exchanged for another by the fairies. 25 trace range through 26 perforce forcibly 29 fountain spring. starlight sheen shining starlight 30 square quarrel 33 shrewd mischievous. sprite spirit 35 villagery village population 36 Skim milk i.e., steal the cream. quern hand mill (where Puck presumably hampers the grinding of grain) 37 bootless in vain. (Puck prevents the cream from turning to butter.) huswife housewife 38 barm head on the ale. (Puck prevents the barm or yeast from producing fermentation.) 39 Mislead night wanderers i.e., mislead with false fire those who walk abroad at night (hence earning Puck his other names of Jack o' Lantern and Will o' the Wisp) 40 Those . . . Puck i.e., Those who call you by the names you favor rather than those denoting the mischief you do 45 bean-fed full of beans 46 a filly foal a mare (in heat) 47 gossip's old woman's 48 crab crab apple 50 dewlap loose skin on neck 51 aunt old woman. saddest most serious

- And in the spiced Indian air by night
 Full often hath she gossiped by my side
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking th'embarked traders on the flood,
 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
 Following—her womb then rich with my young
 squire—
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land
 To fetch me trifles, and return again
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
 And for her sake I will not part with him.
- OBERON
 How long within this wood intend you stay?
- TITANIA
 Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.
 If you will patiently dance in our round
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.
- OBERON
 Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.
- TITANIA
 Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.
Exeunt [Titania with her train].
- OBERON
 Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
 Till I torment thee for this injury.
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb' rest
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,
 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
 To hear the sea-maid's music?
- PUCK
 I remember.
- OBERON
 That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth
 Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
 And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,
 And the imperial vot'ress passèd on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
 Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
- 127 traders trading vessels. flood flood tide 129 wanton (1) playful (2) amorous 130 swimming smooth, gliding 140 round circular dance 142 spare shun 146 from go from 149 Since when 151 dulcet sweet. breath voice, song 152 rude rough 157 all fully. certain sure 158 vestal vestal virgin. (Contains a complimentary allusion to Queen Elizabeth as a votaress of Diana and probably refers to an actual entertainment in her honor at Elvetham in 1591.) by in the region of 159 loosed released 160 As as if 161 might could 164 fancy-free free of love's spell. 165 bolt arrow
- It fell upon a little western flower,
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
 And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
 Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.
 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
 Will make or man or woman madly dote
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.
 Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
 Ere the leviathan can swim a league.
- PUCK
 I'll put a girdle round about the earth
 In forty minutes. [Exit.]
- OBERON
 Having once this juice,
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
 The next thing then she waking looks upon,
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
 And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
 As I can take it with another herb,
 I'll make her render up her page to me.
 But who comes here? I am invisible,
 And I will overhear their conference.
 [He stands aside.]
- Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.*
- DEMETRIUS
 I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.
 Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
 The one I'll slay; the other slayeth me.
 Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood;
 And here am I, and wood within this wood
 Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
 Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.
- HELENA
 You draw me, you hardhearted adamant!
 But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
 Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
 And I shall have no power to follow you.
- DEMETRIUS
 Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
 Or rather do I not in plainest truth
 Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?
- HELENA
 And even for that do I love you the more.
 I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
 The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
 Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
 Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
 What worsè place can I beg in your love—
 And yet a place of high respect with me—
 Than to be usèd as you use your dog?
- 168 love-in-idleness pansy, heartsease. 171 or man either man 174 leviathan sea monster, whale 192 wood . . . wood madly frantic within this wood. (With an obvious wordplay on wood, meaning "woods.") 195 adamant lodestone, magnet. (With pun on hardhearted, since adamant was also thought to be the hardest of all stones and was confused with the diamond.) 197 Leave you Give up 199 speak you fair speak courteously to you.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well. [Exit.] 244

OBERON

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

Enter Puck.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

PUCK

Ay, there it is. [He offers the flower.]

OBERON

I pray thee, give it me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, 249
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, 250
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine, 251
With sweet muskroses and with eglantine. 252
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night, 253
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enameled skin, 255
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in. 256
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes 257
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

220 M Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.

[He gives some love juice.]

I A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes,
224 L But do it when the next thing he espies
E May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
S By the Athenian garments he hath on.

Effect it with some care, that he may prove
227 ' More fond on her than she upon her love; 266
, And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

PUCK

Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.
Exeunt [separately].

231

232

233

A[2.2]

235 N *Enter Titania, Queen of Fairies, with her train.*

TITANIA

Come, now a roundel and a fairy song; 1
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence—
N Some to kill cankers in the muskrose buds, 3
N Some war with rermice for their leathern wings 4
240 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders
8 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep. 7
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

Fairies sing.

5 FIRST FAIRY

You spotted snakes with double tongue, 9
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
9 B Newts and blindworms, do no wrong; 11
U Come not near our Fairy Queen.

214 **impeach** call into question 215 **To leave** by leaving 218 **desert** deserted 220 **privilege** safeguard, warrant. **For that** Because 224 **in my respect** as far as I am concerned, in my esteem 227 **brakes** thickets 231 **Apollo . . . chase** (In the ancient myth, Daphne fled from Apollo and was saved from rape by being transformed into a laurel tree; here it is the female who *holds the chase*, or pursues, instead of the male.) 232 **griffin** a fabulous monster with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. **hind** female deer 233 **bootless** fruitless 235 **stay** wait for, put up with. **questions** talk or argument. 240 **Your . . . sex** i.e., The wrongs that you do me cause me to act in a manner that disgraces my sex. 244 **upon** by

249 **blows** blooms 250 **oxlips** flowers resembling cowslip and primrose 251 **woodbine** honeysuckle 252 **muskroses** a kind of large, sweet-scented rose. **eglantine** sweetbrier, another kind of rose. 253 **sometime of** for part of 255 **throws** sloughs off, sheds 256 **Weed** garment 257 **streak** anoint, touch gently 266 **fond on** doting on
2.2. **Location: The wood.**
1 **roundel** dance in a ring 3 **cankers** cankerworms (i.e., caterpillars or grubs) 4 **rermice** bats 7 **quaint** dainty 9 **double** forked 11 **Newts** water lizards. (Considered poisonous, as were *blindworms*—small snakes with tiny eyes—and spiders.)

CHORUS [*dancing*]

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

FIRST FAIRY

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

CHORUS [*dancing*]

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

SECOND FAIRY

Hence, away! Now all is well.
One aloof stand sentinel.
[*Exeunt Fairies, leaving one sentinel.*]

*Enter Oberon [and squeezes the flower on
Titania's eyelids].*

OBERON

What thou see'st when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true love take;
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near. [*Exit.*]

Enter Lysander and Hermia.

LYSANDER

Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the wood;
And to speak truth, I have forgot our way.
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

13 Oh, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence! 51
Love takes the meaning in love's conference. 52
I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it;
Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath—
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny,
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie. 58

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

32 With half that wish the wisher's eyes be pressed! 71
[*They sleep, separated by a short distance.*]

Enter Puck.

PUCK

Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none
On whose eyes I might approve 74
This flower's force in stirring love.
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.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe. 85

[*He applies the love juice.*]

When thou wak'st, let love forbid 86
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid. 87
So awake when I am gone,
For I must now to Oberon. *Exit.*

Enter Demetrius and Helena, running.

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius!

13 **Philomel** the nightingale. (Philomela, daughter of King Pandion, was transformed into a nightingale, according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6, after she had been raped by her sister Procne's husband, Tereus.) 23 **offense** harm. 32 **sentinel** (Presumably Oberon is able to outwit or intimidate this guard.) 36 **ounce** lynx 37 **Pard** leopard 48 **troth** faith, trothplight.

51–2 **take . . . conference** take my meaning in an innocent sense, with generosity and sympathy! True lovers do so when they converse.

58 **lie** tell a falsehood. (With a riddling pun on *lie*, "recline.")

60 **beshrew** (A mild oath.) 71 **With . . . pressed!** i.e., I return half that wish, so that you, the wisher, may sleep well too (instead of Sleep giving all his rest to me)! 74 **approve** test 85 **owe** own. 86–7 **let . . . eyelid** may love, heretofore denied, be enthroned in your eyes.

DEMETRIUS	I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.		But you must flout my insufficiency?	
HELENA	Oh, wilt thou darkling leave me? Do not so.	92	Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,	135
DEMETRIUS	Stay, on thy peril! I alone will go.	[Exit.] 93	In such disdainful manner me to woo.	
HELENA	Oh, I am out of breath in this fond chase!	94	But fare you well. Perforce I must confess	
	The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.	95	I thought you lord of more true gentleness.	138
	Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,	96	Oh, that a lady, of one man refused,	139
	For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.		Should of another therefore be abused!	Exit. 140
	How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears;		LYSANDER	
	If so, my eyes are off'ner washed than hers.		She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there,	
	No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,		And never mayst thou come Lysander near!	
	For beasts that meet me run away for fear.		For as a surfeit of the sweetest things	
	Therefore no marvel though Demetrius	102	The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,	
	Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.	103	Or as the heresies that men do leave	145
	What wicked and dissembling glass of mine	104	Are hated most of those they did deceive,	146
	Made me compare with Hermia's spherie eyne?	105	So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,	
	But who is here? Lysander, on the ground?		Of all be hated, but the most of me!	148
	Dead, or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.		And, all my powers, address your love and might	149
	Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.		To honor Helen and to be her knight!	Exit.
LYSANDER [awaking]	And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.		HERMIA [awaking]	
	Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,	110	Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best	
	That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.		To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!	
	Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word		Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here!	
	Is that vile name to perish on my sword!		Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.	
HELENA	Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.		Methought a serpent ate my heart away,	
	What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what		And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.	156
	though?		Lysander! What, removed? Lysander! Lord!	
	Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.		What, out of hearing? Gone? No sound, no word?	
LYSANDER	Content with Hermia? No! I do repent		Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear;	159
	The tedious minutes I with her have spent.		Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.	160
	Not Hermia but Helena I love.		No? Then I well perceive you are not nigh.	
	Who will not change a raven for a dove?		Either death, or you, I'll find immediately.	
	The will of man is by his reason swayed,		Exit. [The sleeping Titania remains.]	
	And reason says you are the worthier maid.		❖	
	Things growing are not ripe until their season;		[3.1]	
	So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.		Enter the clowns [Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute,	
	And, touching now the point of human skill,		Snout, and Starveling].	
	Reason becomes the marshal to my will			
	And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook	121	BOTTOM Are we all met?	
	Love's stories written in love's richest book.		QUINCE Pat, pat; and here's a marvelous convenient	2
HELENA	Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?		place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our	
	When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?		stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house, and we	4
	Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,	124	will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke.	
	That I did never—no, nor never can—	125	BOTTOM Peter Quince?	
	Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,		QUINCE What sayest thou, bully Bottom?	7
			BOTTOM There are things in this comedy of Pyramus	
			and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must	
			draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot	
			abide. How answer you that?	
			SNOUT By'r lakin, a parlous fear.	12

92 **darkling** in the dark 93 **on thy peril** i.e., on pain of reprisal if you don't obey me and stay. 94 **fond** dotting 95 **my grace** the favor I obtain. 96 **lies dwells** 102–3 **no marvel** . . . **thus** i.e., no wonder that Demetrius flies from me as from a monster. 104 **glass mirror** 105 **compare** compare myself. **spherie eyne** eyes as bright as stars in their spheres. 110 **Transparent** Radiant, pure. **art** skill, magic power 121 **will** desire 124 **ripe not** have not ripened 125 **touching** . . . **skill** reaching now the age of mature judgment 127 **o'erlook** read over 129 **Wherefore** Why

135 **Good troth, good sooth** i.e., Indeed, truly 138 **lord of** i.e., possessor of. **gentleness** courtesy. 139 **of** by 140 **abused** ill treated. 145–6 **as . . . deceive** as renounced heresies are hated most by those persons who formerly were deceived by them 148 **Of . . . of** by . . . by 149 **address** direct, apply 156 **prey** act of preying. 159 **an if** for love's sake. 3.1. **Location: The action is continuous.** 0.1 **clowns** rustics 2 **Pat** On the dot, punctually 4 **brake** thicket. **tiring-house** attiring area, hence backstage 7 **bully** i.e., worthy, jolly, fine fellow 12 **By'r lakin** By our ladykin, i.e., the Virgin Mary. **parlous** perilous, alarming

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

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

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

BOTTOM No, make it two more: let it be written in eight and eight.

SNOUT Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING I fear it, I promise you.

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

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

BOTTOM Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus or to the same defect: "Ladies," or "Fair ladies, I would wish you," or "I would request you," or "I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble; my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are." And there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

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

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

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

[*They consult an almanac.*]

QUINCE Yes, it doth shine that night.

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

QUINCE Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great cham-

ber; for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

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

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

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

Enter Robin [Puck].

PUCK [*aside*]

What hempen homespuns have we swagg'ring here So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?

What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor; An actor, too, perhaps, if I see cause.

QUINCE Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM [*as Pyramus*]

"Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors sweet—"

QUINCE Odors, odors.

BOTTOM "—Odors savors sweet;

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.

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

And by and by I will to thee appear." *Exit.*

PUCK A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. [*Exit.*]

FLUTE Must I speak now?

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

FLUTE [*as Thisbe*]

"Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire.

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb."

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

FLUTE

Oh—"As true as truest horse that yet would never tire."

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

64–5 roughcast a mixture of lime and gravel used to plaster the outside of buildings 72 hempen homespuns i.e., rustics dressed in homespun fabric made from hemp 73 cradle i.e., Titania's bower 74 toward about to take place. 83 A stranger . . . here The strangest Pyramus you ever saw. 89 triumphant magnificent 90 brisky juvenal lively youth. eke also. Jew (A desperate attempt to rhyme with *hue*, inspired perhaps by the first syllable of *juvenal*.) 93 Ninus' Ninus was the mythical founder of Nineveh (whose wife, Semiramis, was supposed to have built the walls of Babylon where the story of Pyramus and Thisbe takes place) 95 part (An actor's part was a script consisting only of his speeches and their cues.) 97.1–2 with the ass head (This stage direction, taken from the Folio, presumably refers to a standard stage property.)

14 when all is done i.e., when all is said and done. 16 Write me i.e., Write at my suggestion. (*Me* is used colloquially.) 22 eight and six alternate lines of eight and six syllables, a common ballad measure. 28 lion among ladies (A contemporary pamphlet tells how, at the christening in 1594 of Prince Henry, eldest son of King James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, a "blackamoore" instead of a lion drew the triumphal chariot, since the lion's presence might have "brought some fear to the nearest.") 29 fearful fear-inspiring 37 defect (Bottom's blunder for "effect.") 39 my life for yours i.e., I pledge my life to make your lives safe. 40 it were . . . life i.e., I should be sorry, by my life; or, my life would be endangered. 55–6 bush of thorns bundle of thornbush fagots. (Part of the accoutrements of the man in the moon, according to the popular notions of the time, along with his lantern and his dog.) 56 disfigure (Quince's blunder for "figure," "represent.")

BOTTOM	"If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine."	98	BOTTOM	Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays—the more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can glee upon occasion.	141
QUINCE	Oh, monstrous! Oh, strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters! Fly, masters! Help!		TITANIA	Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.	
	[<i>Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.</i>]		BOTTOM	Not so, neither. But if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.	144 145
PUCK	I'll follow you: I'll lead you about a round, Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier. Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometimes a hound, A hog, a headless bear, sometimes a fire; And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. <i>Exit.</i>	101	TITANIA	Out of this wood do not desire to go. Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no. I am a spirit of no common rate.	148 149
BOTTOM	Why do they run away? This is a knavery of them to make me afraid.		M	The summer still doth tend upon my state, And I do love thee. Therefore, go with me. I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee, And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep, And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep. And I will purge thy mortal grossness so That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.— Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed!	156
	<i>Enter Snout.</i>		'	<i>Enter four Fairies [Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed].</i>	
SNOUT	Oh, Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?		PEASEBLOSSOM	Ready.	
BOTTOM	What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you? [Exit Snout.]		COBWEB	And I.	
	<i>Enter Quince.</i>		MOTE	And I.	
QUINCE	Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated.	113	MUSTARDSEED	And I.	
BOTTOM	I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me, to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [He sings.]	114	ALL	Where shall we go?	
	The ouzel cock so black of hue, With orange-tawny bill, The throstle with his note so true, The wren with little quill—		TITANIA	Be kind and courteous to this gentleman. Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes; Feed him with apricots and dewberries, With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries; The honey bags steal from the humble-bees, And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs, And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes, To have my love to bed and to arise; And pluck the wings from painted butterflies To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes. Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.	120 122 123 160 161 164 165
TITANIA	[<i>awaking</i>] What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?		PEASEBLOSSOM	Hail, mortal!	
BOTTOM	[<i>sings</i>] The finch, the sparrow, and the lark, The plainsong cuckoo gray, Whose note full many a man doth mark, And dares not answer nay— For indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? Who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo" never so?	126 128 129	COBWEB	Hail!	
			MOTE	Hail!	
TITANIA	I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. Mine ear is much enamored of thy note; So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape; And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.	130 131 135	MUSTARDSEED	Hail!	
			BOTTOM	I cry Your Worships mercy, heartily. I beseech Your Worship's name.	174
			COBWEB	Cobweb.	

98 If Even if. fair handsome. were would be 101 about a round roundabout 104 fire will-o'-the-wisp 113–14 translated transformed. 120 ouzel cock male blackbird 122 throstle song thrush 123 with little quill with small pipe, i.e., high-pitched note; or else with small feathers 126 plainsong singing a melody without variations 128 dares . . . nay i.e., cannot deny that he is a cuckold 129 set his wit to employ his intelligence to answer 130 give . . . lie call the bird a liar 131 never so ever so much. 135 thy . . . force the power of your unblemished excellence

141 glee jest 144–5 serve . . . turn answer my purpose. 148 rate rank, value. 149 still . . . state always waits upon me as a part of my royal retinue 156 Mote i.e., speck. (The two words *moth* and *mote* were pronounced alike, and both meanings may be present.) 160 in his eyes in his sight (i.e., before him) 161 dewberries blackberries 164 night . . . thighs (The waxen thighs of the bumble-bee are to be fashioned into wax candles to light Bottom's way in the dark.) 165 eyes (In fact, the light is emitted by the abdomen. *Eyes* may be metaphorical.) 174 I cry . . . mercy I beg pardon of Your Worships (for presuming to ask a question)

BOTTOM I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good 177
 Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold 178
 with you.—Your name, honest gentleman? 179

PEASEBLOSSOM Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, 181
 your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. 182
 Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more
 acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir?

MUSTARDSEED Mustardseed.

BOTTOM Good Master Mustardseed, I know your 186
 patience well. That same cowardly, giantlike ox-beef 187
 hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I
 promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water 189
 ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good
 Master Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Come wait upon him; lead him to my bower.
 The moon methinks looks with a wat'ry eye;
 And when she weeps, weeps every little flower, 194
 Lamenting some enforced chastity. 195
 Tie up my lover's tongue; bring him silently. 196

Exeunt.



[3.2]

Enter [Oberon,] King of Fairies.

OBERON

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

[Enter] Robin Goodfellow [Puck].

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

PUCK

My mistress with a monster is in love.
 Near to her close and consecrated bower,
 While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
 A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
 Were met together to rehearse a play
 Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
 The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort,
 Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
 Forsook his scene and entered in a brake.
 When I did him at this advantage take,

177 I . . . acquaintance I crave to be better acquainted with you
 178–9 If . . . you (Cobwebs were used to stanch bleeding.)
 181 Squash unripe pea pod 182 Peascod ripe pea pod 186–7 your
 patience what you have endured. (Mustard is eaten with beef.)
 189 water (1) weep for sympathy (2) smart, sting 194 And . . .
 flower (Dew was thought to fall from the heavens in greater propor-
 tion as the moon shown fully.) 195 enforced violated. (The moon is
 associated throughout the play with the goddess Diana and chastity.)
 196 Tie . . . tongue (Presumably Bottom is braying like an ass.)
 3.2. Location: The wood.
 5 night-rule diversion or misrule for the night 7 close secret 8 dull
 drowsy 9 patches clowns, fools. rude mechanicals ignorant arti-
 sans 10 stalls market booths 13 barren sort stupid company or
 crew 14 presented acted 15 scene playing area

An ass's noll I fixèd on his head. 17

Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,

And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy, 19

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,

Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort, 20

Rising and cawing at the gun's report,

Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky, 23

So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;

And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;

He "Murder!" cries and help from Athens calls.

Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus

strong, 27

Made senseless things begin to do them wrong,

For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch;

Some, sleeves—some, hats; from yielders all things

catch. 30

I led them on in this distracted fear

And left sweet Pyramus translated there,

When in that moment, so it came to pass,

Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON

This falls out better than I could devise.

But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes 36

With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

PUCK

I took him sleeping—that is finished too—

And the Athenian woman by his side,

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

Enter Demetrius and Hermia.

OBERON

Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

PUCK

This is the woman, but not this the man.

[They stand aside.]

DEMETRIUS

Oh, why rebuke you him that loves you so?

Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe. 7

HERMIA

Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,

For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.

If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,

Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep, 48

And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day

As he to me. Would he have stolen away

From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon

This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon 53

May through the center creep, and so displease

Her brother's noontide with th'Antipodes. 55

17 noll noddle, head 19 mimic actor 20 fowler hunter of game
 birds 21 russet-pated choughs reddish brown or gray-headed jack-
 daws. in sort in a flock 23 Sever themselves i.e., scatter
 27–8 Their . . . wrong Their weakened physical senses, disabled by
 their strong fears, made it seem to them as though inanimate things
 in the forest were attacking them 30 from . . . catch the forest
 snatches away everything from those who yield to it. 36 latched
 snared, taken prisoner 40 of force perforce 48 Being o'er shoes
 having waded in so far 53 whole solid 55 Her . . . Antipodes i.e.,
 the sun's noontime on the opposite side of the earth, among the peo-
 ple who live there, the Antipodes.

	It cannot be but thou hast murdered him; So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.		
DEMETRIUS	So should the murdered look, and so should I, Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty. Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.		
HERMIA	What's this to my Lysander? Where is he? Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?		
DEMETRIUS	I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.		
HERMIA	Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then? Henceforth be never numbered among men. Oh, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake: Durst thou have looked upon him being awake? And hast thou killed him sleeping? Oh, 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.	57 62	
DEMETRIUS	You spend your passion on a misprised mood. I am not guilty of Lysander's blood, Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.		
HERMIA	I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.		
DEMETRIUS	And if I could, what should I get therefor?		
HERMIA	A privilege never to see me more. And from thy hated presence part I so. See me no more, whether he be dead or no. <i>Exit.</i>		
DEMETRIUS	There is no following her in this fierce vein. Here therefore for a while I will remain. So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe, Which now in some slight measure it will pay, If for his tender here I make some stay. <i>[He] lie[s] down [and sleeps].</i>		
OBERON	What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite And laid the love juice on some true love's sight. Of thy misprision must perforce ensue Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.		
PUCK	Then fate o'errules, that, one man holding troth, A million fail, confounding oath on oath.		
OBERON	About the wood go swifter than the wind, And Helena of Athens look thou find. All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear. By some illusion see thou bring her here. I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.	57 96 97 99	
PUCK	I go, I go, look how I go, Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. <i>[Exit.]</i>	62	101
OBERON	<i>[applying love juice to Demetrius's eyes]</i> Flower of this purple dye, Hit with Cupid's archery, Sink in apple of his eye. When his love he doth espy, Let her shine as gloriously As the Venus of the sky. When thou wak'st, if she be by, Beg of her for remedy. <i>Enter Puck.</i>		104
PUCK	Captain of our fairy band, Helena is here at hand, And the youth, mistook by me, Pleading for a lover's fee. Shall we their fond pageant see? Lord, what fools these mortals be!	74	113 114
OBERON	Stand aside. The noise they make Will cause Demetrius to awake.	78	
PUCK	Then will two at once woo one; That must needs be sport alone. And those things do best please me That befall preposterously. <i>[They stand aside.]</i>		119 121
	<i>Enter Lysander and Helena.</i>	84	
LYSANDER	Why should you think that I should woo in scorn? Scorn and derision never come in tears. Look when I vow, I weep; and vows so born, In their nativity all truth appears. How can these things in me seem scorn to you, Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?	86 87 124 125 90	
HELENA	You do advance your cunning more and more. When truth kills truth, oh, devilish-holy fray! These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er? Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh;	92 93	128 129

57 **dead** deadly, or deathly pale 62 **to** to do with 68 **once** once and for all 69 **being awake** when he was awake. 70 **brave touch!** fine stroke! (Said ironically.) 71 **worm** serpent 72 **doubler** (1) more forked (2) more deceitful 74 **You . . . mood** Your anger is misdirected. 78 **therefor** in return for that. 84–7 **So . . . stay** The heaviness of sorrow grows still heavier when sleepiness adds to the weariness caused by sorrow, which debt to sleepiness I will now repay in part if I can stop here and accept what sleep has to offer. 90 **misprision** mistake 92–3 **Then . . . oath** If so, then fate prevails; for each male who is able to keep true faith in love, a million will fail, breaking oath on oath.

96 **fancy-sick** lovesick. **cheer** face 97 **sighs . . . dear** (Each sigh was supposed to cost the heart a drop of blood.) 99 **against . . . appear** in anticipation of her coming. 101 **Tartar's bow** (Tartars were famed for their skill with the bow.) 104 **apple** pupil 113 **fee** privilege, reward. 114 **fond pageant** foolish spectacle 119 **alone** unequalled. 121 **preposterously** out of the natural order. 124 **Look when** Whenever 124–5 **vows . . . appears** i.e., vows made by one who is weeping give evidence thereby of their sincerity. 128 **advance** carry forward, display 129 **When . . . truth** i.e., When one of your vows cancels the other

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

LYSANDER
I had no judgment when to her I swore.

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

LYSANDER
Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS [*awaking*]
O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
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 congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. Oh, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

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

LYSANDER
You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.
And here, with all 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
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 guestwise sojourned,
And now to Helen is it home returned,
There to remain.

LYSANDER
Helen, it is not so.

133 tales lies. 139 show appearance 141 Taurus' Taurus was a lofty mountain range in Asia Minor 142 turns to a crow i.e., seems black by contrast 144 seal pledge 146 set against attack 150 in souls i.e., heart and soul 153 superpraise overpraise. parts qualities 157 trim pretty, fine. (Said ironically.) 159 sort character, quality 160 extort twist, torture 169 will none i.e., want no part of her. 171 to . . . sojourned only visited with her

DEMETRIUS
133 Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear. 175
Look where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Enter Hermia.

HERMIA
177 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.
139 Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
141 But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

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

HERMIA
144 What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER
146 Lysander's love, that would not let him bide—
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light. 188
Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee
150 know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA
153 You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA
157 Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me. 194
Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid!
159 Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
160 To bait me with this foul derision? 197
Is all the counsel that we two have shared— 198
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—oh, is all forgot?
All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods 203
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
Had been incorporate. So we grew together, 208
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
213 Due but to one and crowned with one crest. 214
And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.

175 aby pay for 177 his its 188 oes spangles (here, stars) 194 in spite of me to vex me. 197 bait torment, as one sets on dogs to bait a bear 198 counsel confidential talk 203 artificial skilled in art or creation 208 incorporate of one body. 213–14 Two . . . crest i.e., we have two separate bodies, just as a coat of arms in heraldry can be represented twice on a shield but surmounted by a single crest.

- 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
Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.
- HERMIA
I understand not what you mean by this.
- HELENA
Ay, do! Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up.
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare 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
Oh, excellent!
- HERMIA [*to Lysander*] Sweet, do not scorn her so.
- DEMETRIUS [*to Lysander*]
If she cannot entreat, I can compel.
- LYSANDER
Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak
prayers.—
Helen, I love thee, by my life, I do!
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.
- DEMETRIUS [*to Helena*]
I say I love thee more than he can do.
- LYSANDER
If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.
- DEMETRIUS
Quick, come!
- HERMIA Lysander, whereto tends all this?
- LYSANDER
Away, you Ethiope!
- [*He tries to break away from Hermia.*]
- DEMETRIUS No, no; he'll 257
Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow, 258
But yet come not. You are a tame man. Go!
- LYSANDER [*to Hermia*]
Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose, 260
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!
M Out, loathèd med'cine! O hated potion, hence! 264
- HERMIA
I Do you not jest?
- HELENA Yes, sooth, and so do you. 265
- LYSANDER
E Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.
- DEMETRIUS
S I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you. I'll not trust your word. 268
- LYSANDER
, What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
237 Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 238
- HERMIA
S What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
240 Hate me? Wherefore? Oh, me, what news, my love? 272
242 Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
A I am as fair now as I was erewhile. 274
N Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me.
N Why, then you left me—oh, the gods forbid!—
N In earnest, shall I say?
- LYSANDER Ay, by my life!
O And never did desire to see thee more.
N Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
N Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.
- HERMIA [*to Helena*]
248 O, me! You juggler! You cankerblossom! 282
8 You thief of love! What, have you come by night
O And stol'n my love's heart from him?
HELENA Fine, i'faith!
5 Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
9 No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
9 Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
B Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you! 288
- HERMIA
U "Puppet"? Why, so! Ay, that way goes the game.
255 Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,
And with her personage, her tall personage,

230 tender offer 232 grace favor 237 sad grave, serious
238 mouths i.e., mows, faces, grimaces. upon at 239 hold . . . up
keep up the joke. 240 carried carried out, brought off 242 argu-
ment subject for a jest. 248 entreat i.e., succeed by entreaty
255 withdraw . . . too i.e., withdraw with me and prove your claim
in a duel. (The two gentlemen are armed.)

257 Ethiope (Referring to Hermia's relatively dark hair and complex-
ion; see also *tawny Tartar* six lines later.) 258 take on as act as if,
make a fuss as if 260 Hang off Let go 264 med'cine i.e., poison
265 sooth truly 268 weak bond i.e., Hermia's arm. (With a pun on
bond, "oath," in the previous line.) 272 what news what is the mat-
ter 274 erewhile just now. 282 cankerblossom worm that destroys
the flower bud, or wild rose. 288 puppet (1) counterfeit (2) dwarfish
woman (in reference to Hermia's smaller stature)

Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
 And are you grown so high in his esteem
 Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
 How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak!
 How low am I? I am not yet so low
 But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.
 [She flails at Helena but is restrained.]

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

HERMIA Lower? Hark, again!

HELENA
 Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
 I evermore did love you, Hermia,
 Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you,
 Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
 I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
 He followed you; for love I followed him.
 But he hath chid me hence and threatened me
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too.
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
 To Athens will I bear my folly back
 And follow you no further. Let me go.
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

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

HELENA
 A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA
 What, with Lysander?

HELENA With Demetrius.

LYSANDER
 Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

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

HELENA
 Oh, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd.
 She was a vixen when she went to school;
 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

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

LYSANDER Get you gone, you dwarf!
 You minimus, of hind'ring knotgrass made!
 You bead, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS You are too officious
 In her behalf that scorns your services.
 Let her alone. Speak not of Helena;

Take not her part. For, if thou dost intend
 Never so little show of love to her,
 Thou shalt aby it.

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

DEMETRIUS
 Follow? Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.
 [Exit, following Lysander.]

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

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

HERMIA
 I am amazed and know not what to say. Exit.
 [Oberon and Puck come forward.]

OBERON
 This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st,
 Or else commit'st thy knaveries willfully.

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

OBERON
 Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight.
 Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
 The starry welkin cover thou anon
 With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
 And lead these testy rivals so astray
 As one come not within another's way.
 Like to Lysander sometimes frame thy tongue,
 Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
 And sometimes rail thou like Demetrius.
 And from each other look thou lead them thus,
 Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
 With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.
 Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,
 Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
 To take from thence all error with his might
 And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
 When they next wake, all this derision
 Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,

300 curst shrewish 302 right true. for for all 304 something somewhat 310 stealth stealing away 312 chid me hence driven me away with his scolding 313 spurn kick 314 so if only 317 fond foolish 323 keen and shrewd fierce and shrewd. 329 minimus diminutive creature. knotgrass a weed, an infusion of which was thought to stunt the growth

333 intend give sign of 335 aby pay for 338 cheek by jowl i.e., side by side. 339 coil turmoil, dissension. 'long of on account of 340 go not back i.e., don't retreat. (Hermia is again proposing a fight.) 352 so far at least to this extent. sort turn out 353 As in that 355 Hie Hasten 356 welkin sky 357 Acheron river of Hades (here representing Hades itself) 359 As that 360 frame thy tongue fashion your speech 361 wrong insults 365 batty batlike 366 this herb i.e., the antidote (mentioned in 2.1.184) to love-in-idleness 367 virtuous efficacious 368 his its 369 wonted accustomed 370 derision laughable business

And back to Athens shall the lovers wend With league whose date till death shall never end. Whiles I in this affair do thee employ, I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy; And then I will her charmèd eye release From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.	373		
PUCK My fairy lord, this must be done with haste, For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast, And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger, At whose approach ghosts, wand'ring here and there, Troop home to churchyards. 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.	379 380		
OBERON But we are spirits of another sort. I with the Morning's love have oft made sport, And, like a forester, the groves may tread Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red, Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams, Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams. But notwithstanding, haste, make no delay. We may effect this business yet ere day.	389 390		[Exit.]
PUCK 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. <i>Enter Lysander.</i>			
LYSANDER Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.			
PUCK [<i>mimicking Demetrius</i>] Here, villain, drawn and ready. Where art thou?	402		
LYSANDER I will be with thee straight.			
PUCK Follow me, then, To plainer ground. <i>[Lysander wanders about, following the voice.]</i> <i>Enter Demetrius.</i>	403		
DEMETRIUS Lysander! Speak again! Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled? Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?	404		
373 date term of existence 379 dragons (Supposed here to be yoked to the car of the goddess of night or the moon.) 380 Aurora's harbinger the morning star, precursor of dawn 383 crossways . . . burial (Those who had committed suicide were buried at crossways, with a stake driven through them; those who intentionally or accidentally drowned [in <i>floods</i> or deep water] would be condemned to wander disconsolately for lack of burial rites.) 387 for aye forever 389 the Morning's love Cephalus, a beautiful youth beloved by Aurora; or perhaps the goddess of the dawn herself 390 forester keeper of a royal forest 399 Goblin Hobgoblin. (Puck refers to himself.) 402 drawn with drawn sword 403 straight immediately. 404 plainer more open. s.d. <i>Lysander wanders about</i> (Lysander may exit here, but perhaps not; neither exit nor reentrance is indicated in the early texts.)			
PUCK [<i>mimicking Lysander</i>] Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars, Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars, And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child, I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled That draws a sword on thee.	409		
DEMETRIUS Yea, art thou there?			
PUCK Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.	412		<i>Exeunt.</i>
[<i>Lysander returns.</i>]			
LYSANDER M He goes before me and still dares me on. When I come where he calls, then he is gone. The villain is much lighter-heeled than I. I followed fast, but faster he did fly, That fallen am I in dark uneven way, And here will rest me. [<i>He lies down.</i>] Come, thou gentle day! S For if but once thou show me thy gray light, I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [<i>He sleeps.</i>] , [<i>Enter</i>] Robin [<i>Puck</i>] and Demetrius.	383		
PUCK S Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?			
DEMETRIUS H Abide me, if thou dar'st; for well I wot Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place, A And dar'st not stand nor look me in the face. N Where art thou now? N Come hither. I am here.	399		422
DEMETRIUS N Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear, O If ever I thy face by daylight see. N Now go thy way. Faintness constraineth me N To measure out my length on this cold bed. By day's approach look to be visited. [<i>He lies down and sleeps.</i>]	426		
8 <i>Enter Helena.</i>			
HELENA 5 O weary night, O long and tedious night, Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east, 9 That I may back to Athens by daylight B From these that my poor company detest; U And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye, Steal me awhile from mine own company! [<i>She lies down and</i>] sleep[s].	432		
PUCK Yet but three? Come one more; Two of both kinds makes up four. Here she comes, curst and sad. Cupid is a knavish lad, Thus to make poor females mad. [<i>Enter Hermia.</i>]	439		
409 recreant cowardly wretch 412 try test 422 Abide Confront, face. wot know 426 buy this dear pay for this dearly 432 Abate lessen, shorten 439 curst ill-tempered			

HERMIA
 Never so weary, never so in woe,
 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
 I can no further crawl, no further go;
 My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
 Here will I rest me till the break of day.
 Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
 [She lies down and sleeps.]

PUCK
 On the ground
 Sleep sound.
 I'll apply
 To your eye,
 Gentle lover, remedy.
 [He squeezes the juice on Lysander's eyes.]
 When thou wak'st,
 Thou tak'st
 True delight
 In the sight
 Of thy former lady's eye;
 And the country proverb known,
 That every man should take his own,
 In your waking shall be shown:
 Jack shall have Jill;
 Naught shall go ill;
 The man shall have his mare again, and all shall
 be well. [Exit. The four sleeping lovers remain.]



[4.1]

Enter [Titania,] Queen of Fairies, and [Bottom
 the] clown, and Fairies; and [Oberon,] the King,
 behind them.

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

BOTTOM Where's Peaseblossom?
 PEASEBLOSSOM Ready.
 BOTTOM Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's
 Monsieur Cobweb?
 COBWEB Ready.
 BOTTOM Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get you
 your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped
 humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good mon-
 sieur, 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.
 [Exit Cobweb.]

Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?
 MUSTARDSEED Ready.

461 Jack shall have Jill (Proverbial for "boy gets girl.")
 4.1. Location: The action is continuous. The four lovers are still
 asleep onstage. (Compare with the Folio stage direction: "They sleep
 all the act.")
 2 amiable lovely. coy caress

BOTTOM Give me your neaf, Monsieur Mustardseed. 19
 Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur. 20
 MUSTARDSEED What's your will?
 BOTTOM Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalery 22
 Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur, 23
 for methinks I am marvelous hairy about the face; and
 I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me I
 must scratch.

TITANIA
 What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?
 BOTTOM I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's
 have the tongs and the bones. 29
 [Music: tongs, rural music.]

M TITANIA
 Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.
 I L BOTTOM Truly, a peck of provender. I could munch 31
 E your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to
 S a bottle of hay. Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow. 33

TITANIA
 I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
 The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.
 BOTTOM I had rather have a handful or two of dried
 peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me. 37
 I have an exposition of sleep come upon me. 38

TITANIA
 Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.—
 Fairies, begone, and be all ways away. 40
 [Exeunt Fairies.]
 So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle 41
 Gently entwist; the female ivy so
 Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
 Oh, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!
 [They sleep.]

Enter Robin Goodfellow [Puck].

OBERON [coming forward]
 Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?
 Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
 For, meeting her of late behind the wood
 Seeking sweet favors for this hateful fool, 48
 I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
 For she his hairy temples then had rounded
 With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
 And that same dew, which sometime on the buds 52
 Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls, 53
 Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
 Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
 When I had at my pleasure taunted her,

19 neaf fist 20 leave your courtesy i.e., stop bowing, or put on your hat 22 Cavalery Cavalier. (Form of address for a gentleman.)
 23 Cobweb (Seemingly an error, since Cobweb has been sent to bring honey, while Peaseblossom has been asked to scratch.) 29 tongs . . . bones instruments for rustic music. (The tongs were played like a triangle, whereas the bones were held between the fingers and used as clappers.) 29.1 Music . . . music (This stage direction is added from the Folio.) 31 peck of provender one-quarter bushel of grain.
 33 bottle bundle. fellow equal. 37 stir disturb 38 exposition of (Bottom's phrase for "disposition to.") 40 all ways in all directions
 41 woodbine bindweed, a climbing plant 48 favors i.e., gifts of flowers 52 sometime formerly 53 orient lustrous

Came here in grace of our solemnity.
 But speak, Egeus. Is not this the day
 That Hermia should give answer of her choice?
 EGEUS It is, my lord.
 THESEUS
 Go bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.
 [Exit an Attendant.]
Shout within. Wind horns. They all start up.
 Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.
 Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?
 LYSANDER
 Pardon, my lord. [They kneel.]
 THESEUS I pray you all, stand up. [They stand.]
 I know you two are rival enemies;
 How comes this gentle concord in the world,
 That hatred is so far from jealousy
 To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?
 LYSANDER
 My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
 Half sleep, half waking; but as yet, I swear,
 I cannot truly say how I came here.
 But, as I think—for truly would I speak,
 And now I do bethink me, so it is—
 I came with Hermia hither. Our intent
 Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
 Without the peril of the Athenian law—
 EGEUS
 Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough.
 I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
 They would have stol'n away; they would, Demetrius,
 Thereby to have defeated you and me,
 You of your wife and me of my consent,
 Of my consent that she should be your wife.
 DEMETRIUS
 My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
 Of this their purpose hither to this wood,
 And I in fury hither followed them,
 Fair Helena in fancy following me.
 But, my good lord, I wot not by what power—
 But by some power it is—my love to Hermia,
 Melted as the snow, seems to me now
 As the remembrance of an idle gaud
 Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
 And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
 The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
 Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
 Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia,
 But like a sickness did I loathe this food;
 But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
 Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
 And will forevermore be true to it.
 THESEUS
 Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
 Of this discourse we more will hear anon.

133 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, 181
 Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
 Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity. 184
 Come, Hippolyta.
 [Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.]
 138 DEMETRIUS
 These things seem small and undistinguishable,
 Like far-off mountains turnèd into clouds.
 HERMIA
 Methinks I see these things with parted eye, 188
 When everything seems double.
 HELENA So methinks;
 And I have found Demetrius like a jewel, 190
 Mine own, and not mine own.
 DEMETRIUS Are you sure 191
 That we are awake? It seems to me
 That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
 The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?
 HERMIA
 Yea, and my father.
 HELENA And Hippolyta.
 LYSANDER
 And he did bid us follow to the temple.
 DEMETRIUS
 Why, then, we are awake. Let's follow him,
 And by the way let us recount our dreams.
 [Exeunt the lovers.]
 BOTTOM [awaking] 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, stolen hence and
 left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have
 had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream
 it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this
 dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell
 what. Methought I was—and methought I had—but
 man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what
 methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the
 ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to
 taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report,
 what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write
 a ballad of this dream. It shall be called "Bottom's
 Dream," because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it
 in the latter end of a play, before the Duke. Peradventure,
 to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her
 death. [Exit.]



181 for since. something somewhat 184 in great solemnity with great ceremony. 188 parted i.e., improperly focused 190–1 like . . . own i.e., something precious that seems mine and yet so mysteriously found that I can hardly believe it is mine. 202 God's May God save 205 go about attempt 208 patched wearing motley, i.e., a dress of various colors. offer venture 209–11 The eye . . . report (Bottom garbles 1 Corinthians 2:9.) 213 ballad (The proper medium for relating sensational stories and preposterous events.) 214 hath no bottom is unfathomable 216 her Thisbe's (?)

133 in . . . solemnity in honor of our wedding ceremony. 138 Saint Valentine (Birds were supposed to choose their mates on Saint Valentine's Day.) 162 in fancy driven by love 166 idle gaud worthless trinket

[4.2]

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

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

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

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

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

FLUTE No, he hath simply the best wit of any 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 the joiner.

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

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

Enter Bottom.

BOTTOM Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?

QUINCE Bottom! Oh, most courageous day! Oh, 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 Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say it is a sweet comedy. No more words. Away! Go, away! *[Exeunt.]*

**4.2. Location: Athens.**

4 transported carried off by fairies; or, transformed. **8 discharge** perform **9 wit** intellect **11 person** appearance **14 a . . . naught** a shameful thing. **17–18 we . . . men** i.e., we would have had our fortunes made. **20 sixpence a day** i.e., as a royal pension **25 hearts** good fellows. **28 am . . . wonders** have wonders to relate. **32 of** out of **34 strings** (to attach the beards) **35 pumps** light shoes or slippers **37 preferred** selected for consideration.

[5.1]

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate, [lords, and attendants].

HIPPOLYTA

'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of. 1

THESEUS

More strange than true. I never may believe 2

These antique fables nor these fairy toys. 3

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend 5

More than cool reason ever comprehends. 6

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet

M Are of imagination all compact. 8

One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;

That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,

Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt. 11

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;

And as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination

S That, if it would but apprehend some joy, 20

It comprehends some bringer of that joy;

Or in the night, imagining some fear, 21

How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

HIPPOLYTA

But all the story of the night told over,

And all their minds transfigured so together,

More witnesseth than fancy's images 25

And grows to something of great constancy;

But, howsoever, strange and admirable. 27

Enter lovers: Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.

THESEUS

8 Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Joy, gentle friends! Joy and fresh days of love

Accompany your hearts!

LYSANDER

5 More than to us 37

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

THESEUS

9 Come now, what masques, what dances shall we 32

have,

To wear away this long age of three hours

Between our after-supper and bedtime?

Where is our usual manager of mirth?

5.1. Location: Athens. The palace of Theseus.

1 that that which **2 may** can **3 antique** old-fashioned. (Punning, too, on *antic*, "strange," "grotesque.") **fairy toys** trifling stories about fairies. **5 fantasies** imaginations. **apprehend** conceive, imagine **6 comprehends** understands. **8 compact** formed, composed. **11 Helen's** i.e., of Helen of Troy, pattern of beauty. **brow of Egypt** i.e., face of a gypsy. **20 bringer** i.e., source **21 fear** object of fear **25 More . . . images** testifies to something more substantial than mere imaginings **26 constancy** certainty **27 howsoever** in any case. **admirable** a source of wonder. **32 masques** courtly entertainments

	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 abridgment have you for this evening? What masque? What music? How shall we beguile The lazy time, if not with some delight?	39	
PHILOSTRATE	[giving him a paper]		
	There is a brief how many sports are ripe. Make choice of which Your Highness will see first.	42	
THESEUS	[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. [He reads.] "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. [He reads.] "The thrice three Muses mourning for the death Of Learning, late deceased in beggary?" That is some satire, keen and critical, Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony. [He reads.] "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?"	44 47 48 49 50 51 52 53	
PHILOSTRATE	A play there is, my lord, some ten words long, Which is as brief as I have known a play; But by ten words, my lord, it is too long, Which makes it tedious. For in all the play There is not one word apt, one player fitted. And tragical, my noble lord, it is, For Pyramus therein doth kill himself. Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess, Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears The passion of loud laughter never shed.	55 59	
THESEUS	What are they that do play it?	8	
PHILOSTRATE	Hardhanded men that work in Athens here, Which never labored in their minds till now, And now have toiled their unbreathed memories	10 15 74	
	With this same play, against your nuptial.	75	
THESEUS	And we will hear it.		
PHILOSTRATE	No, my noble lord, It is not for you. I have heard it over, And it is nothing, nothing in the world; Unless you can find sport in their intents, Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain To do you service.	80	
THESEUS	I will hear that play; For never anything can be amiss When simpleness and duty tender it.		
	Go, bring them in; and take your places, ladies. [Philostrate goes to summon the players.]	80	
HIPPOLYTA	I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged, And duty in his service perishing.	85 86	
THESEUS	Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.		
HIPPOLYTA	He says they can do nothing in this kind.	88	
THESEUS	The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing. Our sport shall be to take what they mistake; And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect Takes it in might, not merit. Where I have come, great clerks have purposed To greet me with premeditated welcomes; Where I have seen them shiver and look pale, Make periods in the midst of sentences, Throttle their practiced accent in their fears, And in conclusion dumbly have broke off, Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet, Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome; And in the modesty of fearful duty I read as much as from the rattling tongue Of saucy and audacious eloquence. Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity In least speak most, to my capacity.	89 90 91 92 93 97 105	
	[Philostrate returns.]		
PHILOSTRATE	So please Your Grace, the Prologue is addressed.	106	
THESEUS	Let him approach. [A flourish of trumpets.] Enter the Prologue [Quince].		
PROLOGUE	If we offend, it is with our good will. That you should think, we come not to offend, But with good will. To show our simple skill, That is the true beginning of our end.		

39 **abridgment** pastime (to abridge or shorten the evening)

42 **brief** summary 44 **battle** . . . **Centaurs** (Probably refers to the battle of the Centaurs and the Lapithae, when the Centaurs attempted to carry off Hippodamia, bride of Theseus's friend Pirothous. The story is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 12.) 47 **kinsman** (Plutarch's "Life of Theseus" states that Hercules and Theseus were near kinsmen. Theseus is referring to a version of the battle of the Centaurs in which Hercules was said to be present.) 48–9 **The riot** . . . **rage** (This was the story of the death of Orpheus, as told in *Metamorphoses* 11.)

50 **device** show, performance 52–3 **The thrice** . . . **beggary** (Possibly an allusion to Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, 1591, though "satires" deploring the neglect of learning and the creative arts were commonplace.) 55 **sorting with** befitting 59 **strange** (Sometimes emended to an adjective that would contrast with *snow*, just as *hot* contrasts with *ice*.) 74 **toiled** taxed. **unbreathed** unexercised

75 **against** in preparation for 80 **conned** memorized 85 **wretchedness o'ercharged** social or intellectual inferiority overburdened 86 **his service** its attempt to serve 88 **kind** kind of thing. 91–2 **noble** . . . **merit** noble consideration values it for the effort made rather than for the actual worth. 93 **clerks** learned men 97 **practiced accent** i.e., rehearsed speech; or, usual way of speaking 105 **least** i.e., saying least. **to my capacity** in my judgment and understanding. 106 **Prologue** speaker of the prologue. **addressed** ready.

Consider, then, we come but in despite.
 We do not come, as minding to content you, 113
 Our true intent is. All for your delight
 We are not here. That you should here repent you,
 The actors are at hand; and, by their show,
 You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS This fellow doth not stand upon points. 118
 LYSANDER He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he 119
 knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not 120
 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. 123
 THESEUS His speech was like a tangled chain: nothing 124
 impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter Pyramus [Bottom], and Thisbe [Flute],
 and Wall [Snout], and Moonshine [Starveling],
 and Lion [Snug].*

PROLOGUE
 Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
 But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
 This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
 This beauteous lady Thisbe is, certain.
 This man with lime and roughcast doth present
 Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder;
 And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
 To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.
 This man with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn
 Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
 By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn 136
 To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
 This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name, 138
 The trusty Thisbe coming first by night
 Did scare away, or rather did affright;
 And as she fled, her mantle she did fall, 141
 Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
 Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall, 143
 And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain;
 Whereat, with blade, with bloody, blameful blade,
 He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast. 146
 And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
 His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
 At large discourse, while here they do remain. 150
Exeunt Lion, Thisbe, and Moonshine.

THESEUS I wonder if the lion be to speak.
 DEMETRIUS No wonder, my lord. One lion may, when
 many asses do.

WALL
 In this same interlude it doth befall 154
 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
 And such a wall as I would have you think

That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
 Did whisper often, very secretly.
 This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show
 That I am that same wall; the truth is so.
 And this the cranny is, right and sinister, 162
 Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS Would you desire lime and hair to speak
 better?
 DEMETRIUS It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard 166
 discourse, my lord.

[Pyramus comes forward.]

THESEUS Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence!
 PYRAMUS
 O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black! 169
 O night, which ever art when day is not!
 O night, O night! Alack, alack, alack,
 I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot.
 And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
 That stand'st between her father's ground and
 mine,
 Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
 Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine
 eyne. [Wall makes a chink with his fingers.]
 Thanks, courteous wall. Jove shield thee well for
 this.
 But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.
 O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
 Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS The wall, methinks, being sensible, should 181
 curse again. 182

PYRAMUS 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 185
 as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Enter Thisbe.

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

PYRAMUS
 I see a voice. Now will I to the chink,
 To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face. 192
 Thisbe!

THISBE My love! Thou art my love, I think.

PYRAMUS
 Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace, 194
 And like Limander am I trusty still. 195

THISBE
 And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill. 196

113 **minding** intending 118 **stand upon points** (1) heed niceties or small points (2) pay attention to punctuation in his reading. (The humor of Quince's speech is in the blunders of its punctuation.) 119 **rid** ridden. **rough** unbroken 120 **stop** (1) stopping of a colt by reining it in (2) punctuation mark. 123 **recorder** wind instrument like a flute. **government** control. 124 **nothing** not at all 136 **think no scorn** think it no disgraceful matter 138 **hight** is called 141 **fall** let fall 143 **tall** courageous 146 **broached** stabbed 150 **At large** in full, at length 154 **interlude** play

162 **right and sinister** from right to left 166 **partition** (1) wall (2) section of a learned treatise or oration 169 **grim-looking** grim-looking 181 **sensible** capable of feeling 182 **again** in return. 185 **pat** exactly 192 **an** if 194 **lover's grace** i.e., gracious lover 195, 196 **Limander, Helen** (Blunders for "Leander" and "Hero.")

PYRAMUS
Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true. 197

THISBE
As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

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

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

PYRAMUS
Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

THISBE
'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay. 202
[*Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.*]

WALL
Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. [Exit.]

THESEUS
Now is the mural down between the two neighbors.

DEMETRIUS
No remedy, my lord, when walls are so willful to hear without warning. 208

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. 210

HIPPOLYTA
It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

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

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

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

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

LYSANDER
This lion is a very fox for his valor. 228

THESEUS
True; and a goose for his discretion. 229

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.

MOON
This lantern doth the hornèd moon present— 235

DEMETRIUS
He should have worn the horns on his head. 236

THESEUS
He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference. 238

MOON
This lantern 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 lantern. How is it else the man i'th' moon?

DEMETRIUS
He dares not come there for the candle, for you see it is already in snuff. 245

HIPPOLYTA
I am awearry of this moon. Would he would change! 246

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

LYSANDER
Proceed, Moon.

MOON
All that I have to say is to tell you that the lantern is the moon, I, the man i'th' moon, this thornbush my thornbush, and this dog my dog.

DEMETRIUS
Why, all these should be in the lantern, 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!

DEMETRIUS
Well roared, Lion.
[*Thisbe runs off, dropping her mantle.*]

THESEUS
Well run, Thisbe.

HIPPOLYTA
Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.
[*The Lion worries Thisbe's mantle.*]

THESEUS
Well moused, Lion. 265

Enter Pyramus. [Exit Lion.]

DEMETRIUS
And then came Pyramus.

LYSANDER
And so the lion vanished.

PYRAMUS
Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.
But stay, oh, spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here?
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?

197 **Shafalus, Procrus** (Blunders for "Cephalus" and "Procris," also famous lovers.) 202 **'Tide** Betide, come 208 **willful willing, without warning** i.e., without warning the parents. (Demetrius makes a joke on the proverb "Walls have ears.") 210 **in this kind** of this sort. **shadows** likenesses, representations 221–2 **am . . . dam** enact the part of a fierce lion, but otherwise am not really a lion. (*Dam* means "mother"; in Shakespeare's source the beast is a lioness.) 228 **is . . . valor** i.e., his valor consists of craftiness and discretion. 229 **a goose . . . discretion** i.e., as discreet as a goose, that is, more foolish than discreet.

235 **lantern** (This original spelling, "lanthorne," may suggest a play on the *horn* of which lanterns were made and also on a cuckold's horns; however, the spelling "lanthorne" is not used consistently for comic effect in this play or elsewhere. At 5.1.134, for example, the word is "lanterne" in the original.) 236–7 **on his head** (As a sign of cuckoldry.) 238 **crescent** a waxing moon 245 **for the** because of the, for fear of the 246 **in snuff** (1) offended (2) in need of snuffing or trimming. 265 **moused** shaken, torn, bitten 274 **dole** grievous event

Oh, dainty duck! Oh, dear!
 Thy mantle good,
 What, stained with blood?
 Approach, ye Furies fell! 280
 O Fates, come, come,
 Cut thread and thrum; 281
 Quail, crush, conclude, and quell! 282
 THESEUS This passion, and the death of a dear friend, 283
 would go near to make a man look sad. 284
 HIPPOLYTA Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man. 285
 PYRAMUS
 Oh, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame? 286
 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. 287
 Come, tears, confound,
 Out, sword, and wound
 The pap of Pyramus; 288
 Ay, that left pap, 289
 Where heart doth hop. [*He stabs himself.*]
 Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. 290
 Now am I dead,
 Now am I fled;
 My soul is in the sky.
 Tongue, lose thy light;
 Moon, take thy flight. [*Exit Moonshine.*]
 Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Pyramus dies.*]
 DEMETRIUS No die, but an ace, for him; for he is 300
 but one. 301
 LYSANDER Less than an ace, man; for he is dead, he is
 nothing. 302
 THESEUS With the help of a surgeon he might yet
 recover, and yet prove an ass. 303
 HIPPOLYTA How chance Moonshine is gone before
 Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?
 THESEUS She will find him by starlight.
 [*Enter Thisbe.*]
 Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.
 HIPPOLYTA Methinks she should not use a long one for
 such a Pyramus. I hope she will be brief.
 DEMETRIUS A mote will turn the balance, which Pyra- 315
 mus which Thisbe, is the better: he for a man, God 316
 warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.
 LYSANDER She hath spied him already with those sweet
 eyes.

280 **Furies fell** fierce avenging goddesses of Greek myth. 281 **Fates** the three goddesses (Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos) of Greek myth who spun, drew, and cut the thread of human life 282 **thread and thrum** i.e., everything—the good and bad alike; literally, the warp in weaving and the loose end of the warp 283 **Quail** overpower. **quell** kill, destroy. 284–5 **This . . . sad** i.e., If one had other reason to grieve, one might be sad, but not from this absurd portrayal of passion. 286 **Beshrew** Curse. (A mild curse.) 287 **frame** create. 290 **cheer** countenance. 293 **pap** breast 303 **ace** the side of the die featuring the single pip, or spot. (The pun is on *die* as a singular of *dice*; Bottom's performance is not worth a whole *die* but rather one single face of it, one small portion.) 304 **one** (1) an individual person (2) unique. 308 **ass** (With a pun on *ace*.) 315 **mote** small particle 315–16 **which . . . which** whether . . . or

DEMETRIUS And thus she means, videlicet: 320
 THISBE
 Asleep, my love?
 What, dead, my dove?
 O Pyramus, arise!
 Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
 Dead, dead? A tomb
 Must cover thy sweet eyes.
 These lily lips,
 This cherry nose,
 These yellow cowslip cheeks,
 Are gone, are gone!
 Lovers, make moan.
 His eyes were green as leeks.
 O Sisters Three, 333
 Come, come to me,
 With hands as pale as milk;
 Lay them in gore,
 Since you have shore 337
 With shears his thread of silk.
 Tongue, not a word.
 Come, trusty sword,
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue! 341
 [*She stabs herself.*]
 And farewell, friends.
 Thus Thisbe ends. 342
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. [*She dies.*]
 THESEUS Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.
 DEMETRIUS Ay, and Wall too.
 BOTTOM [*starting up, as Flute does also*] No, I assure you,
 the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please
 you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance 349
 between two of our company?
 [*The other players enter.*]
 THESEUS No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs
 no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all
 dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that
 writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in
 Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy; and
 so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But, come,
 your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*]
 The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve. 358
 Lovers, to bed, 'tis almost fairy time.
 I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn
 As much as we this night have overwatched. 361
 This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled 362
 The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed. 363
 A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
 In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter Puck [carrying a broom].

320 **means** moans, laments. (With a pun on the meaning, "lodge a formal complaint.") **videlicet** to wit 333 **Sisters Three** the Fates 337 **shore** shorn 341 **imbrue** stain with blood. 349 **Bergomask dance** a rustic dance named from Bergamo, a province in the state of Venice 358 **iron tongue** i.e., of a bell. **told** counted, struck ("toll'd") 361 **overwatched** stayed up too late. 362 **palpable-gross** palpably gross, obviously crude 363 **heavy drowsy**, dull

PUCK

Now the hungry lion roars,
 And the wolf behowls the moon,
 Whilst the heavy plowman snores,
 All with weary task fordone.
 Now the wasted brands do glow,
 Whilst the screech owl, screeching loud,
 Puts the wretch that lies in woe
 In remembrance of a shroud.
 Now it is the time of night
 That the graves, all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite,
 In the churchway paths to glide.
 And we fairies, that do run
 By the triple Hecate's team.
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic. Not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallowed house.
 I am sent with broom before,
 To sweep the dust behind the door.
*Enter [Oberon and Titania,] King and Queen of
 Fairies, with all their train.*

OBERON

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

TITANIA

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

368 **heavy tired** 369 **fordone** exhausted. 370 **wasted brands**
 burned-out logs 376 **Every** . . . **sprite** every grave lets forth its ghost
 379 **triple Hecate's** (Hecate ruled in three capacities: as Luna or Cyn-
 thia in heaven, as Diana on earth, and as Proserpina in hell.)
 382 **frolic** merry. 385 **behind** from behind, or else like sweeping the
 dirt under the carpet. (Robin Goodfellow was a household spirit who
 helped good housemaids and punished lazy ones, but he could, of
 course, be mischievous.) 392 **rehearse** recite

OBERON

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;
 Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are
 Despisèd in nativity,
 Shall upon their children be.
 With this field dew consecrate,
 Every fairy take his gait,
 And each several chamber bless,
 Through this palace, with sweet peace;
 And the owner of it blest
 Ever shall in safety rest.
 Trip away; make no stay;
 Meet me all by break of day.
Exeunt [Oberon, Titania, and train].

PUCK [to the audience]

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.]*

400 **issue** offspring. **create** created 407 **prodigious** monstrous,
 unnatural 410 **consecrate** consecrated 411 **take his gait** go his way
 412 **several** separate 420 **That . . . here** i.e., that it is a "midsummer
 night's dream" 423 **No . . . but** yielding no more than 425 **mend**
 improve. 428 **serpent's tongue** i.e., hissing 432 **Give . . . hands**
 Applaud 433 **restore amends** give satisfaction in return.

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