

William Shakespeare

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

the complete play — original text and a plain modern English translation, side by side

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## Act 1, Scene 1

ATHENS. A ROOM IN THE PALACE OF THESEUS

Duke Theseus is preparing to marry Hippolyta when Egeus interrupts to demand that his daughter Hermia marry Demetrius, invoking an Athenian law that lets him have her executed if she refuses. Hermia loves Lysander, and Theseus gives her until the new moon to obey, enter a convent, or die.

Left alone, Hermia and Lysander plan to elope through the wood outside Athens, and Hermia's friend Helena — hopelessly in love with Demetrius — decides to betray the plan to him in the hope of winning his gratitude.

### Original

### Translation

*Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate and Attendants.*

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 step-dame 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.

Beautiful Hippolyta, our wedding day is nearly here.

Four more happy days and there'll be a new moon

— but this old moon is taking forever to fade,

and it's holding my desires back like a

stepmother or a widow slowly draining a young

man's inheritance.

Four days will sink quickly into night;

four nights will dream the time away.

And then the moon, curved fresh in the sky like a

silver bow, will look down on the night of our

wedding.

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.*

THESEUS

Hippolyta, I woo'd 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 revelling.

*Enter Egeus, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius.*

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke!

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus.

What's the news with thee?

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.  
Stand forth, Demetrius.

My noble lord,

This man hath my consent to marry her.  
Stand forth, Lysander.

And, my gracious Duke,

This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.

Go, Philostrate.

Get the young people of Athens in the mood to  
celebrate.

Wake up the quick, lively spirit of fun.

Send gloom off to funerals where it belongs —  
that pale companion has no place at our  
festivities.

Hippolyta, I courted you with a sword and won  
your love by hurting you.

But I'll marry you in a different key altogether:  
with ceremony, celebration, and revelry.

Long live Theseus, our famous Duke!

Thank you, good Egeus.

What's your news?

I come full of frustration, to make a complaint  
against my own child, my daughter Hermia.

Step forward, Demetrius.

My lord, this man has my permission to marry  
her.

Step forward, Lysander.

And, my gracious Duke, this man has cast a spell  
on my child's heart.

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her  
rhymes,  
And interchang'd 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,  
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats  
(messengers  
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth)  
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's  
heart,  
Turn'd her obedience (which is due to me)  
To stubborn harshness.

And, my gracious Duke,  
Be it so she will not here before your grace  
Consent to marry with Demetrius,  
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens:  
As she is mine I may dispose of her;  
Which shall be either to this gentleman  
Or to her death, according to our law  
Immediately provided in that case.

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia?

Be advis'd, fair maid.  
To you your father should be as a god;  
One that compos'd 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.

You, you, Lysander — you've given her poems,  
exchanged love-tokens with my child.

You've stood under her window in the  
moonlight and sung her fake love songs in a fake  
voice.

You've stamped your image on her imagination  
with bracelets made of your hair, rings,  
ornaments, trinkets, knick-knacks, little gifts,  
flowers, sweets — all of them powerful  
persuaders with a girl too young to resist.

You've used cunning to steal my daughter's  
heart and turned the obedience she owes me  
into stubborn defiance.

And so, my gracious Duke, if she refuses right  
here in front of you to agree to marry Demetrius,  
I claim the ancient right of every Athenian  
father: she is my property and I can dispose of  
her as I choose.

Which means either this gentleman — or her  
death, exactly as our law provides in such cases.

What do you say to that, Hermia?

Think carefully, young lady.

To you, your father should be like a god.

He is the one who made your beauty.

To him you are nothing but a shape stamped in  
wax, and it's in his power to leave the  
impression as it is or wipe it out.

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.

HERMIA

I would my father look'd 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  
For ever the society of men.  
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,  
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,

Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

So is Lysander.

In his own right, yes.

But in this particular case, since he lacks your  
father's approval, the other man has to be  
counted the better match.

I wish my father could see with my eyes.

No — your eyes must learn to see with his  
judgment.

I beg your Grace to forgive me.

I don't know what makes me bold enough for  
this, or whether it's proper for a girl to argue her  
case in a place like this.  
But I beg your Grace to tell me the worst that  
can happen to me if I refuse to marry  
Demetrius.

Either execution, or giving up the company of  
men forever.

So, lovely Hermia, question what you want.  
Consider how young you are, examine your own  
blood.

Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood  
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage,  
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd  
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,  
Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

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.

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.

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

Women who can master their desires that way  
are three times blessed.

But in earthly terms, the rose that is picked and distilled into perfume is happier than the one that withers on its virgin stem, growing and living and dying alone.

Then I'll grow, live, and die that way, my lord,  
before I'll surrender my virginity to a man whose  
authority over me my soul refuses to accept.

By the next new moon — the day my love and I are joined in a lifelong bond — on that day you'll either prepare to die for disobeying your father, or marry Demetrius as he wants, or swear at Diana's altar to a life of permanent celibacy and self-denial.

And Lysander, drop your ridiculous claim; the right is mine.

LYSANDER

You have her father's love, Demetrius.

Let me have Hermia's.

Do you marry him.

EGEUS

Scornful Lysander, true, he hath my love;  
And what is mine my love shall render him;

And she is mine, and all my right of her  
I do estate unto Demetrius.

LYSANDER

I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,  
As well possess'd;

my love is more than his;

My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,  
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';  
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,  
I am belov'd 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 over-full of self-affairs,  
My mind did lose it.

But, Demetrius, come,

You have her father's love, Demetrius.

Let me have Hermia's.

Why don't you marry him instead?

Sneer if you like, Lysander — yes, he does have  
my love, and everything of mine my love gives to  
him.

She is mine, and every right I have over her I  
hereby sign over to Demetrius.

My lord, I'm as well born as he is, and as well off.

I love her more than he does.

My prospects are every bit as good as  
Demetrius's, if not better.

And — worth more than all these boasts put  
together — I'm the one beautiful Hermia loves.

So why shouldn't I pursue my claim?

Demetrius, I'll say this to his face, courted  
Nedar's daughter Helena and won her heart.

That poor woman still adores him — worships  
him, idolizes him — this stained, unfaithful  
man.

I admit I've heard as much, and I meant to talk  
to Demetrius about it, but I had too much of my  
own business on my mind and forgot.

Demetrius, come here.

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.

LYSANDER

Ay me!

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

And you, Egeus — you're both coming with me.  
I have some private instruction for you.

As for you, Hermia, prepare yourself to bend  
your wishes to your father's will, or else the law  
of Athens — which I have no power to soften —  
condemns you to death or to a vow of celibacy.

Come, Hippolyta.

How are you feeling, my love?

Demetrius, Egeus, come along.

I need you both for some wedding business, and  
there's something touching the two of you  
personally that I want to discuss.

We follow you out of duty and desire.

What's this, my love?

Why has your face gone so pale?

How have the roses in your cheeks faded so  
fast?

Probably for lack of rain — though I could water  
them well enough from the storm in my eyes.

Oh dear.

From everything I've ever read, or heard in any  
story or history, love has never had an easy road.

Either the two of them came from different  
social ranks —

HERMIA

O cross!

Too high to be enthrall'd to low.

LYSANDER

Or else misgraffed in respect of years—

HERMIA

O spite!

Too old to be engag'd to young.

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

HERMIA

O hell!

to choose love by another's eyes!

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

If then true lovers have ever cross'd,  
It stands as an edict in destiny.

What a curse —

too highborn to be enslaved to someone  
beneath her.

— or they were badly matched in age —

What a shame —

too old to be paired with someone young.

— or the choice was made by their relatives —

What hell,

to have your love picked out by other people's  
eyes!

Or, if they did happen to want each other, then  
war or death or illness laid siege to their love,  
making it as fleeting as a sound, quick as a  
shadow, brief as a dream — like a flash of  
lightning in a pitch-black night that rips open  
heaven and earth in a moment of fury, and  
before you can even say "Look!" the darkness  
has swallowed it.

That's how fast bright things fall apart.

Then if true lovers have always been thwarted, it  
must be a rule written into fate itself.

Then let us teach our trial patience,  
Because it is a customary cross,  
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and  
sighs,  
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

LYSANDER

A good persuasion;  
therefore, hear me, Hermia.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
Of great revenue, and she hath no child.  
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues,  
And she respects me as her only son.  
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee,  
And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
Cannot pursue us.

If thou lovest me then,  
Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night;  
And in the wood, a league without the town  
(Where I did meet thee once with Helena  
To do observance to a morn of May),  
There will I stay for thee.

HERMIA

My good Lysander!

So let's teach ourselves patience through this  
ordeal, since it's a standard part of the bargain  
— as much a part of love as daydreams and sighs  
and wishes and tears, the whole retinue that  
follows desire around.

That's a sensible way to see it.

So listen, Hermia.

I have a widowed aunt with a large fortune and  
no children of her own.

Her house is seven leagues outside Athens, and  
she treats me like her only son.

There, gentle Hermia, I can marry you — and the  
harsh Athenian law can't follow us that far.

So if you really love me, slip out of your father's  
house tomorrow night and meet me in the wood  
a league outside town, the place where I once  
met you and Helena celebrating May morning.

I'll be waiting for you there.

My dear 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 burn'd 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.

O happy fair!

Your eyes are lode-stars and your tongue's sweet  
air

More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds  
appear.

Sickness is catching.

O were favour so,

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

I swear to you by Cupid's strongest bow, by his  
best golden-tipped arrow, by the innocence of  
Venus's doves, by whatever it is that binds souls  
together and makes love flourish, and by the fire  
that burned Dido of Carthage when she  
watched her faithless Trojan sail away — by  
every promise men have ever broken, which  
outnumbers all the promises women have ever  
made — I will meet you tomorrow, in the very  
place you named.

Keep your promise, love.

Look, here comes Helena.

Good day to you, beautiful Helena!

Where are you off to?

You call me beautiful?

Take that back.

Demetrius loves your beauty —  
you're the lucky beautiful one.

Your eyes are guiding stars, and your voice is  
sweeter music than a lark is to a shepherd's ear  
when the wheat is green and the hawthorn is in  
bud.

Illness is contagious —

I wish looks were too. I'd catch yours before I  
left, Hermia.

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.  
O, teach me how you look, and with what art  
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart!

HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA

O that your frowns would teach my smiles such  
skill!

HERMIA

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA

O that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

HELENA

None but your beauty;

would that fault were  
mine!

HERMIA

My ear would catch your voice, my eye your eye,  
my tongue the sweet tune of yours.

If the world were mine, I'd hand over all of it  
except Demetrius just to be turned into you.  
Oh, teach me how you look at him, teach me the  
trick you use to move Demetrius's heart!

I frown at him, and he still loves me.

If only my smiles could learn that skill from your  
frowns!

I curse him, and he answers with love.

If only my prayers could stir that kind of feeling!

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

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

His stupidity isn't my fault, Helena.

Only your beauty's fault —

and I wish that fault were mine!

Take comfort:

he no more shall see my face;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me.

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turn'd a heaven into hell!

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:

Tomorrow night, when Phoebe doth behold

Her silver visage in the watery glass,

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass

(A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal),

Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

HERMIA

And in the wood where often you and I

Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

There my Lysander and myself shall meet,

And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,

To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow.

Pray thou for us,

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.*

LYSANDER

Take heart:

he won't be seeing my face any longer.

Lysander and I are running away from here.

Before I ever laid eyes on Lysander, Athens

seemed like paradise to me.

What power my love must have, to turn a heaven

into a hell.

Helen, we'll let you in on our plans.

Tomorrow night, when the moon sees her silver

face in the water and beads the grass with liquid

pearl — the hour that always hides lovers

running away — we've arranged to slip out

through the gates of Athens.

And in the wood where you and I so often lay on

the pale primroses, pouring out our sweetest

secrets to each other, that's where Lysander and

I will meet.

Then we'll turn our backs on Athens and go

looking for new friends among strangers.

Goodbye, sweet playmate.

Pray for us — and may you get your Demetrius.

Keep your word, Lysander.

Until tomorrow at midnight, we have to starve

our eyes of the sight of each other.

I will, my Hermia.

Helena, adieu.

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

*Exit Lysander.*

HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!

Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that?

Demetrius thinks not so;

He will not know what all but he do know.

And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,

So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity.

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;

And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.

Nor hath love's mind of any judgment taste.

Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.

And therefore is love said to be a child,

Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

So the boy Love is perjur'd everywhere.

For, ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,

He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;

Goodbye, Helena.

May Demetrius come to adore you as much as  
you adore him.

How much happier some people get to be than  
others!

All over Athens I'm considered as beautiful as  
she is —

but so what?

Demetrius doesn't think so.

He refuses to know what everyone else knows.

And just as he's deluded, doting on Hermia's  
eyes, so am I, admiring everything about him.

Love can take things that are worthless and  
cheap and transform them into something fine  
and dignified.

Love doesn't see with the eyes but with the  
imagination — that's why Cupid is painted with  
wings and blindfolded.

And love's imagination has no judgment in it at  
all: wings and no eyes, the picture of reckless  
haste.

That's why love is called a child, because it's so  
easily fooled in its choices.

Just as boys break their word in games without a  
thought, so love breaks its promises everywhere.

Before Demetrius ever saw Hermia's eyes, he  
swore a hailstorm of oaths that he was mine  
alone —



Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is  
thought fit through  
all Athens, to play in our interlude before the  
Duke and 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 comedy  
and most cruel death of  
Pyramus and Thisbe\_.

BOTTOM

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a  
merry.

Now, good Peter  
Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.

Masters, spread  
yourselves.

QUINCE

Answer, as I call you.

Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOTTOM

Ready.

Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE

Here's the list of every man judged suitable in all  
of Athens to act in our little play before the Duke  
and Duchess on the night of his wedding day.

First, good Peter Quince, tell us what the play is  
about, then read out the names of the actors,  
and so work your way to the point.

Right then — our play is called The Most  
Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of  
Pyramus and Thisbe.

An excellent piece of work, I promise you, and a  
funny one.

Now, good Peter Quince, call your actors from  
the list.

Gentlemen, spread out.

Answer when I call your name.

Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Present.

Tell me what part I'm down for, and carry on.

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What is Pyramus—a lover, or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover, that kills himself most gallantly 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  
humour is for a tyrant.

I could  
play Eracles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to  
make all split.

You, Nick Bottom, are cast as Pyramus.

What sort is Pyramus — a lover or a tyrant?

A lover, who kills himself very nobly for love.

That'll take a few tears to do properly.

If I play it, the audience had better guard their  
eyes.

I'll stir up storms;

I'll do a fair bit of grieving.

On to the others — though what I'm really in the  
mood for is a tyrant.

I could play Hercules brilliantly, or some part  
where you tear up the scenery and bring the  
house down.

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison gates,  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far,  
And make and mar  
The foolish Fates.  
This was lofty.

Now name the rest of the players.

This is Ercles' vein,  
a tyrant's vein;  
a lover is more condoling.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisbe?

A wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

Nay, faith, let not me play a woman.

The raging rocks / And shivering shocks / Shall  
break the locks / Of prison gates, / And  
Phoebus's chariot / Shall shine from far, / And  
make and ruin / The foolish Fates.

Now that was lofty.

Go on, name the rest of the cast.

That was the Hercules style, the tyrant style.

A lover is more the mournful sort.

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Here, Peter Quince.

Flute, you'll have to take on Thisbe.

What's a Thisbe?

A knight errant?

She's the lady Pyramus is in love with.

Oh no, honestly, don't make me play a woman.

I have a beard coming. I've got a beard coming in.

QUINCE

That's all one. Doesn't matter.

You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will. You'll play it in a mask, and you can pitch your voice as high as you like.

BOTTOM

And I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too. If I can cover my face, let me play Thisbe as well.

I'll speak in a monstrous little voice; I'll do a monstrous little voice —

'Thisne, Thisne!' "Thisne, Thisne!"

—'Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisbe dear! and lady dear!' — "Ah, Pyramus, my dearest lover! Your dear Thisbe! Your dear lady!"

QUINCE

No, no, you must play Pyramus; No, no — you have to play Pyramus.

and, Flute, you Thisbe. And Flute, you're Thisbe.

BOTTOM

Well, proceed. Fine. Carry on.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor. 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.

Here, Peter Quince.

Robin Starveling, you'll play Thisbe's mother.

Tom Snout, the tinker.

SNOUT: Here, Peter Quince.

You're Pyramus's father.

I'll play Thisbe's father.

Snug the joiner, you're the lion.

And I hope that's the play properly cast.

SNUG: Is the lion's part written out?

If it is, please give it to me now — I'm a slow  
learner.

You can make it up as you go, since it's nothing  
but roaring.

Let me play the lion too.

I'll roar in a way that does every man's heart  
good to hear.

I will roar that I will make the  
Duke say 'Let him  
roar again, let him roar again.'

QUINCE

If you should do it too terribly, you would fright  
the Duchess and the  
ladies, that they would shriek; and that were  
enough to hang us all.

ALL

That would hang us every mother's son.

BOTTOM

I grant you, friends, if you should fright the  
ladies out of their  
wits, they would have no more discretion but to  
hang us.

But I will  
aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as  
gently as any sucking  
dove;

I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

QUINCE

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  
gentleman-like man.

Therefore you must needs  
play Pyramus.

BOTTOM

I'll roar so well the Duke will say, "Let him roar  
again! Let him roar again!"

If you did it too frighteningly you'd terrify the  
Duchess and the ladies into screaming, and that  
alone would be enough to get us all hanged.

ALL: That would hang every last one of us.

I grant you that, friends — if you scared the  
ladies out of their senses, they'd have no more  
sense than to hang us.

But I'll aggravate my voice so much that I'll roar  
for you as gently as a nursing dove.

I'll roar for you like a nightingale.

You can't play any part but Pyramus, because  
Pyramus is a sweet-faced man, a fine-looking  
man of the sort you'd see on a summer's day, a  
thoroughly lovely, gentlemanly man.

So Pyramus is the part you have to play.

Well, I will undertake it.

to play it in?

QUINCE

Why, what you will.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play bare-faced.

But, masters, here are your parts, and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by tomorrow night;

and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight;

there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known.

All right, I'll take it on.

What colour beard would be best for it?

Oh, whichever you like.

I'll perform it in your straw-coloured beard, or your orange-tan beard, or your deep-dyed purple beard, or your French-crown-coloured beard — your perfect yellow.

Some of your French crowns have no hair on them at all, so you'd be playing it bare-faced.

But, gentlemen, here are your parts, and I have to beg you, request you and implore you to have them learned by tomorrow night.

Meet me in the palace wood, a mile outside town, by moonlight.

We'll rehearse there — because if we meet in the city we'll be trailed by a crowd and our plans will get out.

meantime I will draw a bill of  
properties, such as our play wants.

In the

Meanwhile I'll draw up a list of the props the  
play needs.

I pray you  
fail me not.

I pray you

Please don't let me down.

BOTTOM

We will meet, and there we may rehearse most  
obscenely and  
courageously.

We'll be there, and we can rehearse most  
obscenely and courageously.

Take pains, be perfect;

adieu.

Work hard, be word-perfect.

Farewell.

QUINCE

At the Duke's oak we meet.

We meet at the Duke's oak.

BOTTOM

Enough.

Enough said.

Hold, or cut bow-strings.

Be there or be damned.

*Exeunt.*

## Act 2, Scene 1

A WOOD NEAR ATHENS

In the wood outside Athens, Puck explains that Oberon and Titania are at war over a stolen Indian boy, and their quarrel has thrown the weather and the seasons into chaos. Titania refuses to hand the child over, so Oberon sends Puck for a magic flower whose juice makes a sleeper fall in love with the first creature they see. Overhearing Demetrius cruelly reject Helena, Oberon also orders Puck to use the flower on the young Athenian so that he will love her back.

Original

Translation

*Enter a Fairy at one door, and Puck at another.*

PUCK

How now, spirit!

Well now, spirit —

Whither wander you?

FAIRY

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

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, stol'n from an Indian king;  
She never had so sweet a changeling.  
And jealous Oberon would have the child  
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild:  
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,  
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her  
joy.

where are you wandering off to?

FAIRY: Over hills and valleys, through thickets  
and thorns, over parks and fences, through  
water and fire — I wander everywhere, faster  
than the moon travels its sphere.

I serve the Fairy Queen, sprinkling dew on her  
green fairy-rings.

The tall cowslips are her bodyguard; you can see  
the spots on their golden coats.

Those spots are rubies, the Queen's own gifts,  
and their perfume lives in those freckles.

I have to go and find dewdrops here, and hang a  
pearl in the ear of every cowslip.

Goodbye, you lumpish spirit —  
I'm off.

Our Queen and all her elves will be here any  
minute.

The King is holding his revels here tonight.

Make sure the Queen doesn't cross his path,  
because Oberon is in a furious temper — all  
because she has a beautiful little boy, stolen  
from an Indian king, as her attendant.

She's never had such a lovely stolen child, and  
jealous Oberon wants the boy for his own  
retinue, to roam the wild woods with him.  
But she keeps hold of the child, crowns him  
with flowers, and makes him her whole delight.

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.

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
Call'd Robin Goodfellow.

Are not you he  
That frights the maidens of the villagery,  
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,  
And bootless make the breathless housewife  
churn,

And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,  
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their  
harm?

Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,  
You do their work, and they shall have good  
luck.

Are not you he?

PUCK

Thou speak'st 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,

Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;

And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl

In very likeness of a roasted crab,

And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,

And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.

Now the two of them never meet in any grove or  
meadow, by any clear spring or under bright  
starlight, without a quarrel —

and their elves are so frightened they crawl into  
acorn cups to hide.

FAIRY: Either I'm completely mistaken about  
your shape and build, or you're that  
mischievous, prankish spirit called Robin  
Goodfellow.

Aren't you the one who scares the village girls,  
skims the cream off the milk, sometimes jams  
the hand-mill, makes the housewife churn  
herself breathless for no butter, and keeps the  
beer from fermenting?

Who leads travellers astray at night and laughs  
at the trouble it causes?

But those who call you Hobgoblin and sweet  
Puck — you do their work for them and bring  
them luck.

Aren't you him?

You've got me right.

I am that merry night wanderer.

I clown for Oberon and make him laugh — I'll  
trick a fat, well-fed horse by neighing like a  
young mare.

Or I'll hide in a gossiping woman's drink  
disguised as a roasted crab-apple, and when she  
goes to sip I bob against her lips and spill ale  
down her wrinkled chin.

The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;  
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,  
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;  
And then the whole quire hold their hips and  
loffe  
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear  
A merrier hour was never wasted there.  
But room, fairy.

Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here my mistress.

Would that he were gone!

Sometimes the wisest old aunt, deep in her  
saddest story, mistakes me for her three-legged  
stool; then I slide out from under her, over she  
goes, crying "Tailor!" and coughing with the  
shock — and the whole company holds their  
sides laughing, hooting and sneezing and  
swearing they've never had a better hour.

But make room, fairy:

here comes Oberon.

FAIRY: And here's my mistress.

I wish he'd go.

*Enter Oberon at one door, with his Train, and Titania at another, with hers.*

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

An unlucky meeting by moonlight, proud  
Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon!

Fairies, skip hence;

I have forsworn his bed and company.

What, jealous Oberon?

Fairies, come away.

I've sworn off his bed and his company.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton;

am not I thy lord?

Wait, you reckless creature.

Am I not your husband and lord?

TITANIA

Then I must be thy lady;

but I know

When thou hast stol'n away from fairyland,

And in the shape of Corin sat all day

Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love

To amorous Phillida.

Then I must be your lady —

but I know how you sneaked out of fairyland

and sat all day disguised as the shepherd Corin,

piping on straw and singing love songs to

lovesick Phillida.

Why art thou here,  
Come from the farthest steep of India,  
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,  
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,  
To Theseus must be wedded; and you come  
To give their bed joy and prosperity?

OBERON

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

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy:  
And never, since the middle summer's spring,  
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,  
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,  
Or on the beach'd margin of the sea,  
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our  
sport.  
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,  
Hath every pelting river made so proud  
That they have overborne their continents.

Why are you here now, all the way from the far  
mountains of India? Only because that  
swaggering Amazon, your bootied mistress, your  
warrior sweetheart, is marrying Theseus — and  
you've come to bless their marriage bed.

How dare you, Titania, hint at anything between  
me and Hippolyta, when you know perfectly well  
I know about your feelings for Theseus?  
Didn't you lead him through the glimmering  
night away from Perigenia, whom he raped?

Didn't you make him break his promises to  
Aegles, and Ariadne, and Antiopa?

These are lies your jealousy invented.  
Not once since midsummer began have we met  
on hill or in valley, in forest or meadow, by a  
paved spring or a reedy stream or the sea's edge,  
to dance our rings to the whistling wind,  
without you disrupting our sport with your  
quarrelling.

So the winds, piping to us for nothing, have  
taken revenge by sucking up infectious fogs  
from the sea, which have fallen on the land and  
swollen every insignificant river until it burst its  
banks.

The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green  
corn

Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard.  
The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;  
The nine-men's-morris is fill'd up with mud,  
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,  
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable.

The human mortals want their winter here.  
No night is now with hymn or carol blest.  
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,  
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That rheumatic diseases do abound.  
And thorough this distemperature we see  
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts  
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;  
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown  
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
Is, as in mockery, set.

The spring, the summer,  
The childing autumn, angry winter, change  
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,  
By their increase, now knows not which is  
which.

And this same progeny of evils comes  
From our debate, from our dissension;  
We are their parents and original.

OBERON

Do you amend it, then.

It lies in you.

The ox has strained at his yoke for nothing, the  
ploughman's sweat has been wasted, and the  
green corn has rotted before it grew a beard.

Sheepfolds stand empty in flooded fields, and  
the crows grow fat on diseased carcasses.  
The board for nine-men's-morris is choked with  
mud, and the winding paths cut into the grass  
have gone untrodden so long you can't make  
them out.

Human beings are missing their proper winter:  
no night is blessed now with hymns or carols.  
So the moon, who governs the tides, pale with  
rage, soaks the whole air until sickness is  
everywhere.

Through all this disorder we see the seasons  
change places — frost falls white into the fresh  
lap of the crimson rose, while a fragrant wreath  
of summer buds is set, as if in mockery, on old  
Winter's thin, icy head.

Spring, summer, fruitful autumn and angry  
winter have swapped their usual costumes, and  
the bewildered world can no longer tell one from  
another.

And this whole brood of evils comes from our  
argument, our quarrel.

We are their parents and their source.

Then put it right.

It's in your hands.

Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

I do but beg a little changeling boy

To be my henchman.

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest;

The fairyland buys not the child of me.

His mother was a vot'ress of my order,

And in the spicèd Indian air, by night,

Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;

And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,

Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood,

When we have laugh'd 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.

Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

All I'm asking for is one little stolen boy to be my attendant.

Give it up.

All of fairyland couldn't buy that child from me.

His mother was a worshipper in my order.

Many a night in the spice-scented Indian air she

sat gossiping beside me on Neptune's yellow

sand, and we watched the merchant ships out

on the water and laughed to see the sails swell

pregnant with the flirting wind.

She would imitate them — she was pregnant

then with my little squire — swaying prettily

along, sailing over the land to fetch me some

small thing and coming back as if from a voyage,

loaded with cargo.

But she was mortal, and she died giving birth to that boy.

For her sake I'm raising him,

and for her sake I won't give him up.

How long do you mean to stay in this wood?

Perhaps until after Theseus's wedding day.

If you'll join our dance peacefully and watch our

moonlight revels, come with us.

If not, keep away from me, and I'll steer clear of the places you haunt.

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.

*Exit 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'rst

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 arm'd:

a certain aim he took

At a fair vestal, thronèd by the west,

And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow

As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.

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

Not for your entire kingdom.

Fairies, away —

we'll have a full-blown row if I stay any longer.

Fine, go.

But you won't leave this grove until I've made  
you pay for this insult.

Come here, my gentle Puck.

You remember the time I sat on a headland and  
heard a mermaid riding a dolphin, singing so  
sweetly and harmoniously that the rough sea  
turned calm to hear her, and stars shot wildly  
out of their orbits to listen to her music.

I remember.

At that same moment I saw something you  
couldn't: Cupid, fully armed, flying between the  
cold moon and the earth.

He took careful aim at a lovely virgin enthroned  
in the west and shot his love-arrow hard enough  
to pierce a hundred thousand hearts.

But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery  
moon;  
And the imperial votress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's  
wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower, the herb I showed thee  
once:  
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 Puck.*

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 I saw his burning arrow put out by the  
chaste beams of the watery moon, and the royal  
votress passed on untouched, still lost in  
maiden thoughts, heart-free.

Still, I noticed where Cupid's arrow landed.  
It struck a small western flower — milk-white  
before, now stained purple by love's wound —  
and girls call it love-in-idleness.

Fetch me that flower; I showed you the plant  
once.

Squeeze its juice onto sleeping eyelids and it will  
make a man or a woman fall wildly in love with  
the next living creature they see.

Fetch me that herb, and be back here before a  
whale can swim a mile.

I'll put a belt around the whole earth in forty  
minutes.

Once I have this juice, I'll watch for Titania to fall  
asleep and drop the liquid into her eyes.

Then the first thing she sees when she wakes —  
lion, bear, wolf, bull, prying monkey or busy ape  
— she'll chase after with her whole soul in love.

And before I lift the spell from her sight, which I  
can do with another herb, I'll make her hand the  
boy over to me.

But who comes here?

I am invisible;

And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.*

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.

Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?

The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.

Thou told'st me they were stol'n into this wood,

And here am I, and wode within this wood

Because I cannot meet with Hermia.

Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant,

But yet you draw not iron, for my heart

Is true as steel.

Leave you your power to draw,

And I shall have no power to follow you.

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.

But who's this coming?

I'll turn invisible and listen in on them.

I don't love you, so stop chasing me.

Where are Lysander and beautiful Hermia?

I'll kill him — and she's killing me.

You told me they'd slipped away into this wood,

and here I am, going mad in this wood because I

can't find Hermia.

Now go away and stop following me.

You pull me to you, you hard-hearted magnet —

but it isn't iron you're pulling, because my heart

is true as steel.

Stop drawing me and I'll have no power to

follow you.

Do I lead you on?

Do I say sweet things to you?

Or do I tell you, in the plainest possible words,

that I don't love you and can't love you?

And that only makes me love you more.

I'm your spaniel, Demetrius — and the more you

beat me, the more I'll fawn on you.

Treat me like your spaniel: kick me, hit me,

ignore me, lose me.

Just let me follow you, worthless as I am.

What worser 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?

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

What lower place could I beg for in your  
affections — and yet it would be a high honour  
to me — than to be treated the way you'd treat  
your dog?

Don't push my loathing any further.  
I feel sick when I look at you.

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

You're doing serious damage to your reputation,  
leaving the city and putting yourself in the  
hands of a man who doesn't love you — trusting  
the chances of the night and the bad influence  
of a deserted place with something as valuable  
as your virginity.

Your decency is my protection.

It isn't night when I can see your face, so I don't  
feel I'm in the dark at all.

And this wood is hardly short of company,  
because as far as I'm concerned you are the  
entire world.

So how can anyone say I'm alone, when the  
whole world is here looking at me?

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

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd;  
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 valour 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 woo'd, and were not made to woo.

*Exit Demetrius.*

**HELENA**

I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,

To die upon the hand I love so well.

*Exit Helena.*

## OBERON

Fare thee well, nymph.

The wildest of them has nothing on your heart.  
Run whenever you like — you'll only reverse the  
old story: Apollo will flee and Daphne will chase  
him, the dove will hunt the griffin, the gentle  
deer will run down the tiger.

Pointless speed, when cowardice does the chasing and courage runs away.

I won't stand here answering you.

Let me go — and if you follow me, don't imagine

I won't hurt you out here in the wood.

You already hurt me — in the temple, in the town, in the fields.

Shame on you, Demetrius!

The way you treat me disgraces my whole sex.

We can't fight for love the way men can.

We're supposed to be courted; we weren't built to do the courting.

I'll follow you anyway, and turn this hell into heaven, even if I die at the hands of the man I love.

Goodbye, nymph.

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

*Enter Puck.*

OBERON

Hast thou the flower there?

Welcome, wanderer.

PUCK

Ay, there it is.

OBERON

I pray thee give it me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;  
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,  
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.  
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
And make her full of hateful fantasies.  
Take thou some of it, and seek through this  
grove:  
A sweet Athenian lady is in love  
With a disdainful youth.

Anoint his eyes;

But do it when the next thing he espies  
May be the lady.

Thou shalt know the man  
By the Athenian garments he hath on.

Before he leaves this grove, you'll be the one  
running away and he'll be the one begging for  
your love.

Do you have the flower?

Welcome back, wanderer.

Yes, here it is.

Give it to me, please.

I know a bank where wild thyme is in bloom,  
where oxlips grow and violets nod, shaded over  
by a thick canopy of honeysuckle, sweet musk-  
roses and sweet-brier.  
Titania sleeps there part of the night, lulled  
among those flowers by dancing and delight.  
That's where the snake sheds her patterned skin  
— a garment wide enough to wrap a fairy in.  
I'll paint her eyes with this juice and fill her head  
with loathsome fantasies.  
Take some of it yourself and search this grove.

There's a sweet Athenian lady in love with a  
young man who scorns her.

Anoint his eyes — but time it so that the first  
thing he sees is the lady.

You'll recognize him by his Athenian clothes.

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

Do it carefully, so that he ends up more  
infatuated with her than she is with him.  
And make sure you meet me before the first  
cock crows.

PUCK

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

Don't worry, my lord. Your servant will see to it.

*Exeunt.*

## Act 2, Scene 2

ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD

Titania's fairies sing her to sleep in her bower, and Oberon steals in and squeezes the love-juice onto her eyelids. Lysander and Hermia, lost in the wood, lie down apart to sleep; Puck mistakes Lysander for the scornful Athenian his master described and charms his eyes instead. Lysander wakes to the sight of Helena and instantly declares he loves her, leaving Hermia to wake alone from a nightmare and find him gone.

### Original

### Translation

*Enter Titania with her Train.*

TITANIA

Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;

Come, let's have a dance in a ring and a fairy  
song.

Then for the third part of a minute, hence;  
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;  
Some war with rere-mice for their leathern  
wings,  
To make my small elves coats; and some keep  
back

Then, for a third of a minute, off with you —  
some to kill the grubs in the musk-rose buds,  
some to fight bats for their leathery wings to  
make coats for my little elves, and some to keep  
off the noisy owl that hoots all night and gawks  
at our strange spirits.

The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and  
wonders  
At our quaint spirits.

Now sing me to sleep,  
then go about your duties and let me rest.

Sing me now asleep;

Then to your offices, and let me rest.

Fairies sing.

FIRST FAIRY

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
Newts and blind-worms do no wrong,  
Come not near our Fairy Queen:

CHORUS

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-legg'd spinners, hence.  
Beetles black, approach not near;  
Worm nor snail do no offence.

CHORUS

Philomel with melody, &c.

SECOND FAIRY

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

*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*

*Enter Oberon.*

OBERON

What thou seest when thou dost wake,

*Squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.*

The fairies sing.

You spotted snakes with forked tongues, you  
spiny hedgehogs — keep out of sight.  
Newts and slow-worms, do no harm; come  
nowhere near our Fairy Queen.

Nightingale, join in and sing our sweet lullaby:  
lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby.

Let no harm, no spell, no charm come near our  
lovely lady.  
So good night, with a lullaby.

Weaving spiders, stay away.  
Off with you, long-legged spinners, off.  
Black beetles, don't come close.  
Worms and snails, do no mischief.

Nightingale, join in and sing, and so on.

Away now —  
all's well.  
One of us stand guard at a distance.

Whatever you see when you wake up,

OBERON

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 troth, I have forgot our way.  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA

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

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

take it for your true love.

Love it and pine for it.

Whether it's a lynx, a cat, a bear, a leopard or a  
bristling boar, whatever appears before your  
eyes when you wake will be your darling.

And may you wake with something vile beside  
you.

My love, you're worn out from wandering the  
wood —

and to tell the truth, I've lost our way.

Let's rest here, Hermia, if you think that's best,  
and wait for daylight to help us.

All right, Lysander.

Find yourself somewhere to lie down; I'll rest my  
head on this bank.

One patch of grass will do as a pillow for both of  
us:

one heart, one bed, two bodies, one vow.

No, dear Lysander —

for my sake, lie further away. Don't lie so close.

O take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!  
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,  
So that but one heart we can make of it:  
Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath,  
So then two bosoms and a single troth.  
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;  
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

## HERMIA

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

**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

## HERMIA

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

*They sleep.*

*Enter Puck.*

PUCK

Take my meaning kindly, love.

Lovers understand each other's words in the spirit they're meant.

I mean that my heart is so tied to yours that the  
two make a single heart —  
two bodies chained together by a promise, so  
two bodies and one shared vow.  
So don't refuse me a place beside you.  
Lying there, Hermia, I'd be telling no lie.

Lysander plays with words very charmingly.

Curse my manners and my pride if I meant to  
accuse Lysander of lying.

But, dear friend, out of love and courtesy, lie further off — as ordinary modesty requires.

The distance people would say suits an honourable bachelor and an unmarried girl: keep that far away.

And good night, sweet friend.

May your love never change until your life ends.

Amen, amen, I say to that lovely prayer — and let my life end when my loyalty does.

Here's my bed.

May sleep give you all the rest it has.

And may half that wish close the wisher's own eyes.

Through the forest have I gone,  
But Athenian found I none,  
On whose eyes I might approve  
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;  
When thou wak'st let love forbid  
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.  
So awake when I am gone;  
For I must now to Oberon.

*Exit.*

*Enter Demetrius and Helena, running.*

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

O, wilt thou darkling leave me?

Do not so.

DEMETRIUS

Stay, on thy peril;

I've searched the whole forest and haven't  
found a single Athenian whose eyes I could test  
this flower's love-power on.

Night and silence —

who's this?

He's wearing Athenian clothes.

This must be the man my master meant, the one  
who scorned the Athenian girl.

And here's the girl herself, sound asleep on the  
cold, dirty ground.

Poor soul — she didn't dare lie down near this  
loveless, discourteous brute.

Well, boor, I'm pouring onto your eyes every bit  
of power this charm possesses.

When you wake, let love keep sleep from ever  
settling on your eyelids again.

Wake up once I'm gone;

I have to get back to Oberon.

Wait, Demetrius — even if it kills me, wait.

I'm ordering you: go away and stop hounding  
me like this.

You'd leave me alone in the dark?

Please don't.

Stay at your own risk.

I alone will go.

*Exit Demetrius.*

HELENA

O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!  
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,  
For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.  
How came her eyes so bright?

Not with salt  
tears.  
If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.  
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,  
For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius  
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.  
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine  
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

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

*Waking.*

LYSANDER

And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.  
Transparent Helena!

I'm going on alone.

I'm completely out of breath from this hopeless  
chase — and the more I beg, the less favour I  
get.

Hermia's the lucky one, wherever she's lying  
now, because she has blessed, magnetic eyes.  
How did her eyes get so bright?

Not from crying; if that were it, mine have been  
washed far more often.

No — the truth is I'm as ugly as a bear.  
Animals run from me in terror when they meet  
me.

So it's no wonder Demetrius flees from me as if I  
were a monster.

What lying, flattering mirror of mine let me  
think I could compare with Hermia's starry  
eyes?

But who's this?  
Lysander, on the ground!  
Dead or asleep?  
I see no blood, no wound.  
Lysander, if you're alive, sir, wake up.

And I'll run through fire for your sweet sake.  
Radiant Helena!

Nature shows art,  
That through thy bosom makes me see thy  
heart.

Where is Demetrius?

O, how fit a word  
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

HELENA

Do not say so, Lysander, say not so.

What though he love your Hermia?

Lord, what  
though?

Yet Hermia still loves you.

Then be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia?

No, I do repent  
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.  
Not Hermia, but Helena I love.  
Who will not change a raven for a dove?  
The will of man is by his reason sway'd,  
And reason says you are the worthier maid.  
Things growing are not ripe until their season;  
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;

And touching now the point of human skill,  
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,  
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook  
Love's stories, written in love's richest book.

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?

Nature has worked wonders — I can see your  
heart right through your breast.

Where's Demetrius?

What a fitting name for a man to die on my  
sword.

Don't say such a thing, Lysander, don't.

So what if he loves your Hermia?

Good God, what of it?

Hermia still loves you.

Be satisfied with that.

Satisfied with Hermia?

No — I regret every dull minute I ever spent with  
her.  
It isn't Hermia I love, it's Helena.  
Who wouldn't trade a raven for a dove?  
A man's will is governed by his reason, and  
reason tells me you're the worthier woman.  
Growing things aren't ripe until their season  
comes; I was too young to ripen into reason  
before now.

Now that I've reached the height of human  
judgment, reason takes command of my will and  
leads me to your eyes, where I can read love's  
own stories in love's richest book.

Why was I born to be mocked so sharply?

When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?

Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,

That I did never, no, nor never can

Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,

But you must flout my insufficiency?

Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you  
do,

In such disdainful manner me to woo.

But fare you well;

perforce I must confess,

I thought you lord of more true gentleness.

O, that a lady of one man refus'd,

Should of another therefore be abus'd!

*Exit.*

LYSANDER

She sees not Hermia.

Hermia, sleep thou there,

And never mayst thou come Lysander near!

For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things

The deepest loathing to the stomach brings;

Or as the heresies that men do leave

Are hated most of those they did deceive;

So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,

Of all be hated, but the most of me!

And, all my powers, address your love and might

To honour Helen, and to be her knight!

*Exit.*

*Starting.*

HERMIA

What have I done to deserve this contempt from  
you?

Isn't it enough, young man, isn't it enough that

I never have and never can earn one kind look

from Demetrius, without you sneering at my

failure too?

Honestly, you're wronging me — you really are  
— courting me in this scornful way.

But goodbye.

I have to admit I thought you had more genuine  
decency in you.

How awful that a woman turned down by one  
man should be insulted by another because of  
it.

She doesn't see Hermia.

Hermia, sleep on there, and may you never come  
near Lysander again.

Just as an overdose of the sweetest things leaves  
the deepest disgust in the stomach, and just as a  
heresy someone abandons is hated most by the  
people it once fooled — so may you, my  
overdose and my heresy, be hated by everyone,  
and most of all by me.

And all my strength, devote your love and power  
to serving Helen and being her knight.

Help me, Lysander, help me!

Do thy best

To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!

Ay me, for pity!

What a dream was here!

Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.

Methought a serpent eat my heart away,

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.

Lysander!

What, removed?

Lysander! lord!

What, out of hearing?

Gone?

No sound, no

word?

Alack, where are you?

Speak, and if you hear;

Speak, of all loves!

I swoon almost with fear.

No?

Then I well perceive you are not nigh.

Either death or you I'll find immediately.

*Exit.*

Help me, Lysander, help me!

Do what you can to pull this crawling snake off  
my breast!

Oh, have mercy!

What a dream that was — Lysander, look how  
I'm shaking with fear.

I dreamed a snake was eating my heart away  
while you sat there smiling at its cruel meal.

Lysander!

What, gone?

Lysander! My love!

Can't you hear me?

Gone?

No sound, not a word?

Oh, where are you?

Speak, if you can hear me —  
speak, for love's sake!

I'm nearly fainting with fear.

Nothing?

Then I can tell you're not nearby.

I'll go and find you now, or find my death.

## Act 3, Scene 1

THE WOOD

Quince's company gather in the wood to rehearse "Pyramus and Thisbe," fretting that the sword-fight and the lion will frighten the ladies and inventing prologues to reassure them. Puck finds them, claps an ass's head on Bottom, and scatters the terrified actors. Bottom, unaware of his

transformation, sings to prove he isn't afraid — and wakes the drugged Titania, who instantly falls in love with him and orders her fairies to wait on him.

## Original

## Translation

*The Queen of Fairies still lying asleep.*

*Enter Bottom, Quince, Snout, Starveling, Snug and Flute.*

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

Are we all here?

QUINCE

Pat, pat;

Right on the dot.

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

And here's a marvellously convenient spot for  
our rehearsal.  
This patch of grass will be our stage, this  
hawthorn thicket our dressing room, and we'll  
act it out exactly as we'll do it in front of the  
Duke.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince?

Peter Quince?

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

What is it, big man?

BOTTOM

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and  
Thisbe that will never  
please.

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and  
Thisbe that will never go down well.

First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill  
himself; which the  
ladies cannot abide.

First, Pyramus has to draw a sword to kill  
himself, and ladies can't stand that.

How answer you that?

What's your answer to that?

SNOUT

By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

STARVELING

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

BOTTOM

Not a whit;

I have a device to make all well.

Write

me a prologue, and  
let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm  
with our swords, and  
that Pyramus is not killed indeed;

and for the

more better assurance,  
tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus but  
Bottom the weaver.

This

will put them out of fear.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

No, make it two more;

SNOUT: By our lady, that's a perilous worry.

I think when all's said and done we'll have to cut  
the killing.

Not a bit of it.

I have a scheme that fixes everything.

Write me a prologue, and let the prologue say  
that we'll do no real damage with our swords  
and that Pyramus isn't actually killed.

And for even better assurance, tell them that I,  
Pyramus, am not really Pyramus but Bottom the  
weaver.

That'll take away their fear.

Very well, we'll have a prologue like that, and it'll  
be written in eight-and-six.

No, make it two more —

let it be written in eight

and eight.

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves,  
to bring in (God shield  
us!) a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing.

For there is not a  
more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and  
we ought to look to  
it.

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:

write it in eight and eight.

SNOUT: Won't the ladies be frightened of the  
lion?

I'm afraid they will, I promise you.

Gentlemen, you ought to think this through for  
yourselves: bringing a lion — God protect us —  
in among ladies is a most dreadful business.

There isn't a more fearful wild fowl alive than  
your lion, and we ought to see to it.

SNOUT: So another prologue will have to explain  
he isn't a lion.

No — you have to say his actual name, and half  
his face has to show through the lion's neck.

And he has to speak through it himself, saying  
this, or something 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.

"Ladies" — or "Fair ladies, I would wish you" —  
or "I would request you"

— or "I would beg you not to be afraid, not to  
tremble.

I'd stake my life on your safety.

If you think I've come here as a lion, my life  
wouldn't be worth living.

No, I'm nothing of the sort.

I'm a man just like other men."

And right there let him say his name and tell  
them straight out that he's Snug the joiner.

All right, that's how we'll do it.

But there are two hard problems. One is getting  
moonlight into an indoor room — because 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 almanack;

find out moonshine, find  
out moonshine.

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

SNOUT: Does the moon shine on the night we  
perform?

A calendar, a calendar!

Look in the almanac.

Find moonshine, find moonshine.

Yes, it does shine that night.

Well then, you can leave one pane of the great  
chamber window open where we're performing,  
and the moon can shine in through the  
casement.

Yes — or else somebody has to come in carrying  
a bundle of thorns and a lantern and say he's  
come to disfigure, or to represent, the character  
of Moonshine.

Then there's the other thing: we need a wall in  
the great chamber, because the story says  
Pyramus and Thisbe talked through a crack in 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 rough-cast about him, to  
signify wall; and let him  
hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny  
shall Pyramus and Thisbe  
whisper.

QUINCE

If that may be, then all is well.

Come, sit down,  
every mother's son,  
and rehearse your parts.

Pyramus, you begin:  
when you have spoken your  
speech, enter into that brake;

and so everyone  
according to his cue.

*Enter Puck behind.*

PUCK

What hempen homespuns have we swaggering  
here,  
So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?

SNOUT: You can't possibly bring in a wall. What  
do you say, Bottom?

Somebody or other has to play Wall.

Let him have some plaster or clay or rough  
plaster smeared on him to signify wall, and let  
him hold his fingers like this — and Pyramus  
and Thisbe can whisper through that gap.

If that can be done, we're all set.

Come on, sit down, every last one of you, and  
rehearse your parts.

Pyramus, you start: when you've finished your  
speech, go off into that thicket.

And everyone else the same, on their cues.

What rough homespun louts are these,  
swaggering about so close to the Fairy Queen's  
cradle?

What, a play toward?

I'll be an auditor;

An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, stand forth.

PYRAMUS

\_Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet\_

QUINCE

Odours, odours.

PYRAMUS

\_ . . . odours savours 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.*

THISBE

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.

THISBE

A play in the works?

I'll be an audience — and an actor too, perhaps,  
if I see a reason.

Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, step forward.

Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet —

Odours, odours!

— odours savours sweet.

So is your breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.

But listen — a voice!

Wait here a moment, and I'll be back with you  
shortly.

That's the strangest Pyramus ever played on any  
stage.

Do I speak now?

Yes, of course you do.

You have to understand that he's only gone off  
to see about a noise he heard, and he's coming  
back.

\_Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,  
Of colour 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.'

THISBE

O,

\_As true as truest horse, that yet would never  
tire.\_

*Enter Puck and Bottom with an ass's head.*

PYRAMUS

\_If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.\_

QUINCE

O monstrous!

Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of face,  
coloured like the red rose on the triumphant  
briar, most lively youth and also most lovely Jew,  
as true as the truest horse that never yet grew  
tired — I'll meet you, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Ninus's tomb, man!

And you mustn't say that yet

— that's your answer to Pyramus.

You're rattling off your whole part at once, cues  
and all.

Pyramus, come in!

You've missed your cue; it's "never tire."

Oh.

As true as the truest horse that never yet grew  
tired.

If I were handsome, Thisbe, I would be yours  
alone.

Monstrous!

O strange!

Horrible!

We are haunted.

We're haunted.

Pray,

Run, gentlemen, run!

masters, fly, masters!

Help!

Help!

*Exeunt Clowns.*

PUCK

I'll follow you.

I'll come after you.

I'll lead you about a round,

I'll lead you round and round through bog and  
bush and thicket and briar.

Through bog, through bush, through brake,  
through brier;

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

Sometimes I'll be a horse, sometimes a hound, a

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

hog, a headless bear, sometimes a flame —

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

and I'll neigh and bark and grunt and roar and  
burn, turning into horse, hound, hog, bear and

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

fire at every turn.

*Exit.*

BOTTOM

Why do they run away?

Why are they running away?

This is a knavery of them

This is a trick of theirs to frighten me.

to make me afraid.

*Enter Snout.*

BOTTOM

SNOUT

SNOUT: Oh, Bottom, you're changed!

O Bottom, thou art changed!

What do I see on

What's that I see on you?

thee?

BOTTOM

What do you see?

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

*Exit Snout.*

*Enter Quince.*

QUINCE

Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee!

Thou art  
translated.

*Exit.*

BOTTOM

I see their knavery.

This is to make an ass of me,  
to fright me, if  
they could.

But I will not stir from this place, do  
what they can.

I  
will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that  
they shall hear I am  
not afraid.

*Sings.*

BOTTOM

What do you see?

You see an ass's head of your own, that's what.

Bless you, Bottom, bless you!

You've been transformed.

I see through their trick.

They mean to make an ass of me, to frighten me  
if they can.

But I won't budge from this spot whatever they  
do.

I'll walk up and down here and sing, so they can  
hear I'm not afraid.

The ousel cock, so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill.

*Waking.*

TITANIA

What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

*Sings.*

BOTTOM

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay.  
for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a  
bird?

Who would give  
a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

Methinks, mistress, you should have little  
reason for that.

The blackbird, so black of feather, with his  
orange-brown bill; the thrush with his note so  
true; the wren with his little pipe —

What angel is waking me from my bed of  
flowers?

The finch, the sparrow and the lark, the grey  
cuckoo with his one plain note, which many a  
man hears and doesn't dare contradict —

indeed, who'd bother arguing with such a  
foolish bird?

Who'd call a bird a liar, however often it cries  
"cuckoo"?

Please, gentle mortal, sing again.  
My ear is quite in love with your voice, and my  
eye is just as captivated by your shape.  
The sheer force of your fine qualities compels  
me, at first sight, to say — to swear — that I love  
you.

It seems to me, madam, that you have very 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 neighbours  
will not make them  
friends.

Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM

Not so, neither;

but if I had wit enough to get  
out of this wood, I  
have enough to serve mine own turn.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.  
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.  
I am a spirit of no common rate.  
The summer still doth tend upon my state;  
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me.  
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee;  
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,  
And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost  
sleep.  
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—  
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and  
Mustardseed!

And yet, to tell the truth, reason and love don't  
keep much company these days.

More's the pity that some honest neighbours  
won't make friends of them.

Look at that — I can make a joke when the  
occasion calls for it.

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

Not really either.

But if I had wit enough to find my way out of  
this wood, I'd have enough to get by on.

Don't wish yourself out of this wood.  
You'll stay here whether you want to or not.  
I'm no ordinary spirit — summer itself is in  
permanent attendance on me.  
And I love you, so come with me.  
I'll give you fairies to wait on you, and they'll  
fetch you jewels from the deep sea and sing  
while you sleep on a bed of crushed flowers.

And I'll purge away your heavy mortal body so  
that you can move like a spirit made of air.  
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! Mustardseed!

*Enter four Fairies.*

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

And I.

MOTH

And I.

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

And I.

And I.

ALL

Where shall we go?

Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;

Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,  
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;

The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,  
And for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,  
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,  
To have my love to bed and to arise;  
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,  
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.

Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal!

COBWEB

Hail!

MOTH

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.

Skip along beside him as he walks and dance  
before his eyes.

Feed him apricots and dewberries, purple  
grapes, green figs and mulberries.

Steal the honey-bags from the bumblebees, cut  
off their waxy legs for candles, light them at a  
glow-worm's burning eyes, and use them to see  
my love to bed and up again.

Pull the wings off painted butterflies to fan the  
moonbeams off his sleeping eyes.

Bow to him, elves, and treat him with respect.

Greetings, mortal!

Greetings!

Hail!

MUSTARDSEED

Hail!

BOTTOM

I cry your worships mercy, heartily.

—I beseech

your worship's name.

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good  
Master Cobweb.

If I cut

my finger, I shall make bold with you.

—Your

name, honest gentleman?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash,  
your mother, and to Master  
Peascod, your father.

Good Master

Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of  
more acquaintance too.

Greetings!

Greetings!

I beg your worships' pardon, most sincerely.

May I ask your worship's name?

Cobweb.

I hope to know you better, good Master  
Cobweb.

If I cut my finger, I'll make free with you.

And your name, honest gentleman?

Peaseblossom.

Please give my regards to Mistress Squash, your  
mother, and to Master Peascod, your father.

Good Master Peaseblossom, I look forward to  
knowing you better too.

—Your name, I beseech

you, sir?

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well.

That same cowardly  
giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a  
gentleman of your house.

I  
promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes  
water ere now.

I desire you  
of more acquaintance, good Master  
Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.  
The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye,  
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,  
Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

*Exeunt.*

And your name, sir, if you please?

Mustardseed.

Good Master Mustardseed, I know all about  
your patience.

That cowardly, giant-sized ox-beef has devoured  
many a gentleman of your family.

I promise you, your relatives have made my eyes  
water before now.

I hope to know you better, good Master  
Mustardseed.

Come, attend to him; take him to my bower.

The moon looks watery-eyed to me tonight, and  
when she weeps every little flower weeps with  
her, mourning some virginity that was taken by  
force.

Tie up my love's tongue and bring him in silence.

## Act 3, Scene 2

ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD

Puck reports to Oberon that Titania has fallen for a man with an ass's head, but Oberon discovers Puck charmed the wrong Athenian and orders him to fetch Helena. Both Lysander and Demetrius now swear they love Helena, who is convinced all three friends are mocking her; Hermia and Helena's lifelong friendship collapses into insults about height, and the two men go off to fight a duel. Oberon has Puck fog the wood, mislead the rivals with imitated voices until they drop asleep, and reverse the spell on Lysander so the four can wake sorted.

## Original

## Translation

*Enter Oberon.*

OBERON

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

I wonder whether Titania is awake yet  
— and what the first thing was that met her eye,  
since she'll be helplessly besotted with it.

*Enter Puck.*

OBERON

Here comes my messenger.

Here comes my messenger.

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

Well then, mad spirit?  
What mischief has been going on in this  
haunted grove tonight?

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 thick-skin of that barren sort  
Who Pyramus presented in their sport,  
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake.

My mistress is in love with a monster.  
While she lay sleeping near her private, sacred  
bower, a gang of clowns — rough workmen who  
earn their bread at Athenian market stalls — had  
gathered to rehearse a play meant for great  
Theseus's wedding day.  
The dimmest thick-skull of that dull crowd, the  
one playing Pyramus, walked off his scene and  
into a thicket.

When I did him at this advantage take,  
An ass's noll I fixed on his head.  
Anon, his Thisbe must be answered,  
And forth my mimic comes.

When they him spy,

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,  
So at his sight away his fellows fly,  
And at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;

He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.

Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears, thus strong,  
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;  
For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch;  
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch.

I led them on in this distracted fear,  
And left sweet Pyramus translated there.  
When in that moment, so it came to pass,  
Titania wak'd, and straightway lov'd an ass.

OBERON

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

PUCK

I took my chance and fixed an ass's head on him.  
Soon his Thisbe needed an answer, and out came my actor.

When the others saw him — like wild geese spotting the hunter creeping up, or a flock of grey-headed jackdaws that rise cawing at a gunshot, scatter, and sweep madly across the sky — his friends took one look and flew.

I stamped my foot and down they went, tumbling over each other.  
They cried murder and shouted for help from Athens.

With their wits so feeble and their terror so strong, even lifeless things seemed to attack them:  
briars and thorns snatched at their clothes, stealing a sleeve here, a hat there — anything from anyone who'd let it go.

I chased them along in that panic and left sweet Pyramus there in his new shape.  
And at that very moment, as luck would have it, Titania woke up and fell instantly in love with an ass.

This turns out better than I could have planned.  
But have you dosed the Athenian's eyes with the love-juice the way I told you?

I took him sleeping—that is finish'd too—  
And the Athenian woman by his side,  
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd.

*Enter Demetrius and Hermia.*

OBERON

Stand close.

This is the same Athenian.

PUCK

This is the woman, but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS

O why rebuke you him that loves you so?

Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

HERMIA

Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse,  
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.

If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,  
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,  
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day  
As he to me.

Would he have stol'n away  
From sleeping Hermia?

I'll believe as soon  
This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the  
moon  
May through the centre creep and so displease  
Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.  
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him.

I caught him asleep — that's done too — with  
the Athenian woman lying beside him, so when  
he wakes he can't help but see her.

Get out of sight.

This is the Athenian I meant.

That's the woman, but that's not the man.

Why do you scold the man who loves you so  
much?

Save that bitterness for a bitter enemy.

I'm only scolding you now; I ought to treat you  
far worse, because I'm afraid you've given me  
cause to curse you.

If you've killed Lysander in his sleep, then you're  
already ankle-deep in blood — waded in all the  
way and kill me too.

The sun was never as faithful to the day as he  
was to me.

Would he have crept away from a sleeping  
Hermia?

I'd sooner believe someone had drilled a hole  
through the whole earth and the moon had  
slipped through the middle to spoil her  
brother's noon on the other side of the world.

It can only be that you've murdered him.

So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS

So should the murder'd look, and so should I,  
Pierc'd 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 number'd among men!

O once tell true; tell true, even for my sake!

Durst thou have look'd upon him, being awake,

And hast thou kill'd him sleeping?

That's just how a murderer would look: deathly  
and grim.

That's how a murdered man would look — how I  
look, stabbed through the heart by your ruthless  
cruelty.

And yet you, the murderer, look as bright and  
clear as Venus shining up there in her sphere.

What's any of this to do with my Lysander?

Where is he?

Please, Demetrius, give him back to me.

I'd rather throw his corpse to my dogs.

Get away from me, you dog, you cur!

You've pushed me past the limits of any girl's  
patience.

So you did kill him?

Then never let yourself be counted a human  
being again.

Tell me the truth just once — tell me the truth,  
for my sake.

Would you have dared even look at him while he  
was awake?

And you killed him asleep?

O brave

touch!

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

An adder did it; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a mispris'd 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 therefore?

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.

*Exit.*

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.

*Lies down.*

OBERON

What a brave stroke!

Couldn't a worm, a snake, have managed as  
much?

A snake did do it — because no adder ever had a  
more forked tongue than yours, you serpent.

You're wasting your fury on a  
misunderstanding.

I'm not guilty of Lysander's blood, and as far as I  
know he isn't dead at all.

Then please tell me he's safe.

And if I could, what would I get for it?

The privilege of never seeing me again.  
And I'm leaving your hateful company right now  
— never come near me again, whether he's dead  
or not.

There's no following her while she's in this fury.  
So I'll stay here a while.  
Grief gets heavier when sleep hasn't paid the  
debt it owes to sorrow — and sleep might settle  
a little of that account now, if I wait here for the  
offer.

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 turn'd, and not a false turn'd  
true.

PUCK

Then fate o'er-rules, 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 costs the fresh blood  
dear.  
By some illusion see thou bring her here;  
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

PUCK

I go, I go; look how I go,  
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

*Exit.*

OBERON

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.—

What have you done?

You've got it completely wrong and put the love-  
juice on a faithful lover's eyes.

Your blunder is bound to have turned a true love  
false instead of turning a false one true.

Then blame fate — for every man who keeps his  
promise, a million break theirs, piling broken  
oath on broken oath.

Go round this wood faster than the wind and  
find Helena of Athens.

She's lovesick and pale, sighing away the fresh  
blood that sighs cost so dearly.

Use some trick to bring her here, and I'll charm  
his eyes ready for her arrival.

I'm going, I'm going — watch how I go, faster  
than an arrow from a Tartar's bow.

Purple flower, struck by Cupid's arrow, sink into  
the pupil of his eye.

When he sees the woman who loves him, let her  
blaze as gloriously as Venus in the sky.

When thou wak'st, if she be by,  
Beg of her for remedy.

*Enter Puck.*

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!

OBERON

Stand aside.

The noise they make  
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

PUCK

Then will two at once woo one.

That must needs be sport alone;  
And those things do best please me  
That befall prepost'rously.

*Enter Lysander and Helena.*

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

When you wake, if she's beside you, beg her for  
a cure.

Captain of our fairy band, Helena is close at  
hand, and the young man I got wrong is with  
her, begging to be paid in love.

Shall we watch their ridiculous performance?  
Lord, what fools these mortals are!

Stand back.

The noise they're making will wake Demetrius.

Then two men will be courting one woman at  
once.

That's bound to be entertainment on its own  
— and nothing pleases me more than things  
going completely backwards.

Why would you think I'm courting you as a joke?

Mockery and scorn never come with tears.  
Look at me: I weep as I swear, and vows born  
that way carry their own proof of truth.  
How can anything in me seem like contempt to  
you, when it wears the badge of sincerity?

You do advance your cunning more and more.  
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!

These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing  
weigh:

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

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.

*Waking.*

DEMETRIUS

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!  
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?  
Crystal is muddy.

O how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!  
That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,  
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
When thou hold'st up thy hand.

O, let me kiss

This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA

O spite! O hell!

You keep getting cleverer and cleverer.

When one truth cancels another, that's a  
diabolical kind of holy war.

These vows belong to Hermia — are you giving  
her up?

Weigh oath against oath and you'll weigh  
nothing at all: your promises to her and to me,  
put on two scales, balance exactly, and both are  
as weightless as fairy tales.

I had no judgment when I swore to her.

And none now, in my opinion, when you  
abandon her.

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

O Helen — goddess, nymph, perfection, divinity!  
What can I compare your eyes to, my love?  
Crystal looks muddy beside them.

And how ripe and tempting your lips grow, those  
kissing cherries!

That pure frozen white, the snow high on Mount  
Taurus fanned by the east wind, turns as black  
as a crow when you raise your hand.

Oh, let me kiss that princess of pure white, that  
seal of bliss!

This is spite! This is 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 lov'd her, all that love is gone.

I see you're all determined to gang up on me for  
your own amusement.

If you had any decency or manners, you  
wouldn't do me this much harm.

Isn't it enough to hate me, as I know you do —  
do you have to join forces to mock me as well?

If you were real men, which you certainly look  
like, you wouldn't treat a lady this way:  
swearing and vowing and heaping praise on my  
qualities when I'm certain you despise me in  
your hearts.

The two of you are rivals for Hermia's love  
— and now you're rivals in ridiculing Helena.

What a fine achievement, what a manly  
undertaking, to bring tears to a poor girl's eyes  
with your jeering.

No one with any nobility would insult a girl like  
this and stretch a poor soul's patience to  
breaking point purely for sport.

You're being unkind, Demetrius — don't be.

You love Hermia, and you know I know it.

So here, willingly and wholeheartedly, I hand  
over my claim to Hermia's love.

Give me your claim to Helena in exchange — I  
love her, and I will until I die.

No mockers ever wasted more empty breath.

Lysander, keep your Hermia. I don't want her.

If I ever loved her, all that love is gone.

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd;  
And now to Helen is it home return'd,  
There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

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

*Enter Hermia.*

HERMIA

Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;  
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
It pays the hearing double recompense.  
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;  
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.  
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,  
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night  
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

My heart only lodged with her like a guest, and  
now it's come home to Helen, and home it stays.

Helen, it isn't true.

Don't insult a devotion you know nothing  
about, or you'll pay dearly for it.

Look — here comes your love, your own darling.

Dark night, which takes away the eye's function,  
makes the ear sharper: what it steals from sight  
it pays back double in hearing.

It wasn't my eye that found you, Lysander — I  
thank my ear for leading me to your voice.  
But why were you so unkind as to leave me like  
that?

Why should a man stay when love is driving him  
away?

What love could drive Lysander from my side?

Lysander's own love, which wouldn't let him  
stay — love for beautiful Helena, who gilds the  
night more brightly than all those circles and  
eyes of fire up there.

Why seek'st thou me?

Could not this make thee  
know

The hate I bare thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think;

it cannot be.

HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport in spite of me.

Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid!

Have you conspir'd, have you with these  
contriv'd,

To bait me with this foul derision?

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

For parting us—O, is all forgot?

All school-days' friendship, childhood  
innocence?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needles created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

Both warbling of one song, both in one key,

As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,

Had been incorporate.

So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,

But yet a union in partition,

Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;

Why are you looking for me?

Couldn't this have told you that I left because I  
hate you?

You don't mean what you're saying.

It isn't possible.

Look at that — she's part of the conspiracy!

Now I see it: all three of them have joined up to  
stage this cruel joke at my expense.

Spiteful Hermia, you ungrateful girl!

Have you plotted with these two, arranged with  
them, to bait me with this foul mockery?

Every secret we shared, our vows as sisters, all  
those hours we spent together cursing time for  
walking too fast when it had to separate us — is  
all of it forgotten?

All our schooldays' friendship, our childhood  
innocence?

Hermia, the two of us used to sit like a pair of  
skilled gods and sew one flower with our two  
needles, on one sampler, on one cushion, both  
humming one song in one key — as if our hands,  
our bodies, our voices and our minds had been  
fused into one.

We grew together like a double cherry:

seemingly separate, but joined even in being  
divided — two lovely berries formed on a single  
stem.

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;  
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
Due but to one, and crownèd with one crest.  
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,  
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?  
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.  
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 unlov'd?

This you should pity rather than despise.

HERMIA

Two bodies to look at, but a single heart, like a  
coat of arms where two identical charges belong  
to one person and are topped by one crest.  
And now will you rip our old love apart and side  
with men to jeer at your poor friend?  
It isn't friendly. It isn't decent.  
Every woman has grounds to blame you for it,  
even if I'm the only one it wounds.

I'm astonished by all this passion.  
I'm not mocking you — it sounds as if you're  
mocking me.

Haven't you put Lysander up to it, sending him  
after me to praise my eyes and my face?  
And haven't you set on your other admirer,  
Demetrius, who was shoving me off with his  
foot a moment ago, to call me a goddess, a  
nymph, divine, rare, precious, heavenly?  
Why would he say all that to a woman he can't  
stand?

And why would Lysander deny loving you, when  
his soul is full of you, and offer his affection to  
me instead — unless you'd put him up to it and  
given your consent?

So what if I'm not as favoured as you, not so  
loaded with love, not so lucky, but wretched  
enough to love a man who doesn't love me  
back?

That deserves pity, not contempt.

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

O excellent!

HERMIA

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

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

I don't understand what you mean by any of  
this.

Oh yes. Keep going.

Keep up the sad faces, pull faces at me the  
moment my back is turned, wink at each other,  
sustain the lovely joke.  
Handled this well, this piece of sport deserves to  
go down in history.

If you had any pity or decency or manners, you  
wouldn't make me the subject of it.

But goodbye.

It's partly my own fault, and death or distance  
will soon cure it.

Wait, gentle Helena. Listen to my defence  
— my love, my life, my soul, beautiful Helena!

Oh, excellent!

Darling, don't mock her like that.

If she can't persuade him, I can force him.

You can force no more than she can persuade.  
Your threats have no more strength than her  
feeble prayers.  
Helen, I love you — on my life I do.  
I swear it on the life I'd lay down for you, to  
prove any man a liar who says I don't love you.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

And I say I love you more than he possibly can.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

If you're saying that, step aside and prove it.

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come.

Right now. Come on.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lysander, what is all this leading to?

LYSANDER

Away, you Ethiop!

Get off me, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS

No, no.

No, no.

He will

He'll only pretend to break away from her.

Seem to break loose.

Take on as you would

follow,

You'll make a show of following, but you won't actually come.

But yet come not.

You are a tame man, go!

You're a tame creature. Go on!

LYSANDER

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr!

Let go, you cat, you burr!

Vile thing, let

loose,

Get off me, vile thing, or I'll shake you off like a snake.

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA

Why are you grown so rude?

Why have you turned so brutal?

What change is

What's changed you, my love?

this,

Sweet love?

LYSANDER

Thy love?

Out, tawny Tartar, out!

Out, loathèd medicine! O hated potion, hence!

Your love?

Get off, you dark-skinned Tartar, get off!

Off, you loathsome dose, you hateful potion —  
away!

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

You're joking, aren't you?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

Yes, honestly he is — and so are you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Demetrius, I'll keep my word to you.

DEMETRIUS

I would I had your bond;

for I perceive

A weak bond holds you;

I'll not trust your word.

I wish I had it in writing.

I can see how weak a bond holds you

— I won't trust your word.

LYSANDER

What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?

What, do you want me to hurt her, hit her, kill  
her?

Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

I may hate her, but I won't harm her like that.

HERMIA

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?

Hate me? Wherefore?

What harm could be greater than hatred?

Hate me? Why?

O me! what news, my

love?

God help me, what is this, my love?

Am not I Hermia?

Are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me.

Why then, you left me—O, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life;

And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;

Be certain, nothing truer;

'tis no jest

That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me!

You juggler!

You cankerblossom!

You thief of love!

What! have you come by night

And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i' faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,

No touch of bashfulness?

What, will you tear

Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA

Puppet! Why so?

Aren't I Hermia?

Aren't you Lysander?

I'm as good-looking now as I was an hour ago.

You loved me when night fell — and yet by night you've left me.

So you left me — heaven forbid — you left me in earnest?

Yes, on my life — and I never wanted to see you again.

So give up hoping, stop questioning, stop doubting.

Be certain of it; nothing is truer.

It's no joke: I hate you and I love Helena.

Oh no!

You cheat!

You canker in a flower!

You love-thief!

What, have you come here in the dark and stolen my love's heart out of him?

That's rich, that is!

Have you no modesty, no maidenly shame, not a scrap of restraint?

Do you want to force angry answers out of my mild tongue?

Shame on you, you fraud, you puppet!

Puppet? Why puppet?

Ah, so that's the game.

Now I see it: she's been comparing our heights.

She's played up how tall she is, and with her figure — her tall figure, her impressive height — she's won him over.

Have you climbed so high in his esteem because  
I'm so short, so stunted?  
How short am I, you painted maypole?

Tell me.

## How short am I?

Not so short that my nails can't reach your eyes.

But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

## HELENA

Gentlemen, please — mock me if you like, but don't let her hurt me.

I've never been a scold; I'm no good at all at shrewishness.

I'm a proper girl in that I'm a coward.  
Don't let her hit me.

Perhaps you think that because she's a little shorter than I am, I could take her on.

Because she is something lower than myself,  
That I can match her.

## HERMIA

Shorter! There you go again.

HELENA

Good Hermia, don't be so vicious to me.

I evermore did love you, Hermia,  
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you,  
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,  
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.  
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;  
But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd 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

O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd.

I've always loved you, Hermia, always kept your  
secrets, never wronged you — except that out of  
love for Demetrius I told him you'd slipped away  
to this wood.

He followed you; I followed him out of love.

But he's driven me off and threatened to hit me,  
kick me, even kill me.

Now, if you'll only let me go quietly, I'll carry my  
foolishness back to Athens and follow you no  
further.

Let me go.

You can see for yourself how simple and how  
besotted I am.

Well, go then.

Who's stopping you?

A foolish heart I'm leaving behind here.

What, with Lysander?

With Demetrius.

Don't be afraid; she won't hurt you, Helena.

No, sir, she won't — not even if you take her  
side.

Oh, when she's angry she's sharp and vicious.

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 knot-grass 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.

DEMETRIUS

Follow! Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*

HERMIA

You, mistress, all this coil is long of you.

Nay, go not back.

She was a proper little terror at school, and  
small as she is, she's fierce.

Little again!

Nothing but short and little?

Why are you letting her insult me like this?

Let me get at her.

Clear off, you dwarf, you midget made out of  
stunted knotgrass, you bead, you acorn.

You're being far too officious on behalf of a  
woman who doesn't want your services.

Leave her alone.

Don't mention Helena, don't take her side —  
because if you make even the smallest show of  
loving her, you'll pay for it.

She's not holding me back now.

Follow me, if you dare, and let's settle whose  
claim to Helena is better, yours or mine.

Follow? No — I'll walk right beside you, side by  
side.

You, madam — this whole uproar is your doing.  
No, don't back away from me.

HELENA

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

*Exit.*

HERMIA

I am amaz'd, and know not what to say.

*Exit, pursuing Helena.*

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 seest these lovers seek a place to fight.

Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;  
The starry welkin cover thou anon  
With drooping fog, as black as Acheron,  
And lead these testy rivals so astray  
As one come not within another's way.

I don't trust you, and I won't stay another  
minute in your spiteful company.  
Your hands are quicker than mine in a fight —  
but my legs are longer for running away.

I'm stunned. I don't know what to say.

This is your carelessness.  
You're forever making mistakes — or else you  
play these tricks on purpose.

Believe me, king of shadows, it was a mistake.  
Didn't you tell me I'd recognize the man by the  
Athenian clothes he was wearing?  
So my work was blameless as far as that goes: I  
did anoint an Athenian's eyes.  
And I'm rather glad it turned out this way,  
because I count their squabbling as excellent  
entertainment.

You can see these lovers looking for somewhere  
to fight.

So hurry, Robin — cover the night over. Blanket  
the starry sky with a low fog as black as the river  
of hell, and lead these hot-tempered rivals so far  
astray that neither one ever crosses the other's  
path.

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,  
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;  
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.  
And from each other look thou lead them thus,  
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting 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;  
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 charmed eye release  
From monster's view, and all things shall be  
peace.

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 wandering here and  
there  
Troop home to churchyards.

Damnèd spirits all,  
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,  
Already to their wormy beds are gone;

Sometimes imitate Lysander's voice and goad  
Demetrius with sharp insults; sometimes jeer in  
Demetrius's voice instead.

Keep leading them apart like that until sleep,  
that imitation of death, creeps over their eyelids  
on leaden legs and bat's wings.

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye.  
Its juice has the power to strip away all the error  
and restore his eyes to their proper sight.

When they wake up, all this mockery will seem  
like a dream, an empty vision, and the lovers will  
go back to Athens bound together for life.

While I've got you busy with that, I'll go to my  
queen and ask her for the Indian boy.  
Then I'll free her enchanted eyes from the  
monster she's seeing, and everything will be  
peaceful again.

My fairy lord, this has to be done quickly.  
Night's swift dragons are cutting fast through  
the clouds,  
and over there shines the morning star. At its  
approach the ghosts that wander here and there  
troop home to their churchyards.

All the damned spirits, the ones buried at  
crossroads and in water, have already gone back  
to their worm-eaten beds.

For fear lest day should look their shames upon,  
They wilfully themselves exile from light,  
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd  
night.

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 blessed beams,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.  
But, notwithstanding, haste, make no delay.  
We may effect this business yet ere day.

*Exit Oberon.*

PUCK

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

*Enter Lysander.*

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius?

Speak thou

now.

PUCK

Here, villain, drawn and ready.

Where art thou?

Terrified that daylight will expose their disgrace,  
they exile themselves from the light and are  
condemned to keep company with black-  
browed night forever.

But we are spirits of a different kind.

I've often gone hunting with the dawn, and I  
can walk the groves like a forester right up until  
the moment the fiery-red eastern gate opens on  
the sea and turns its salt-green waters to yellow  
gold with blessed light.

All the same, hurry — no delays.

We can still get this business done before  
daybreak.

Up and down, up and down, I'll lead them up  
and down.

I'm feared in the fields and in the town.

Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

Where are you, proud Demetrius?

Answer me now.

Here, villain, sword drawn and ready.

Where are you?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

I'll be with you in a moment.

PUCK

Follow me then to plainer ground.

Follow me to flatter ground, then.

*Exit Lysander as following the voice.*

*Enter Demetrius.*

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, speak again.

Lysander, speak again.

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?

You runaway, you coward — have you fled?

Speak.

Answer.

In some bush?

Are you in a bush somewhere?

Where dost thou hide thy

Where have you hidden your head?

head?

PUCK

Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,  
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,  
And wilt not come?

You coward, are you boasting to the stars, telling  
the bushes you're spoiling for a fight, and then  
refusing to come?

Come, recreant, come, thou

Come on, traitor, come on, child!

child!

I'll whip thee with a rod.

I'll beat you with a stick.

He is defil'd

Drawing a sword on you would disgrace a man.

That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

So — you're over there, are you?

PUCK

Follow my voice;

Follow my voice.

we'll try no manhood here.

We'll do no fighting here.

*Exeunt.*

*Enter Lysander.*

LYSANDER

He goes before me, and still dares me on;  
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.

The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:  
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly,  
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,  
And here will rest me.  
Come, thou gentle day!

*Lies down.*

LYSANDER

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,  
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite.

*Sleeps.*

*Enter Puck and Demetrius.*

PUCK

Ho, ho, ho!  
Coward, why com'st thou not?

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou dar'st;  
for well I wot  
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,  
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.  
Where art thou?

PUCK

Come hither;  
I am here.

He keeps getting ahead of me and daring me on,  
and when I reach the place he called from, he's  
gone.

The villain is much faster on his feet than I am.  
I chased hard, but he flew faster, and now I've  
ended up in some dark, broken ground.  
I'll rest here.  
Come on, gentle daylight —

Because the moment you show me your grey  
light, I'll find Demetrius and get my revenge for  
this insult.

Ho, ho, ho!  
Coward, why don't you come?

Stand and wait for me, if you dare.  
I know perfectly well you're running ahead of  
me, changing position all the time, never daring  
to hold your ground or look me in the face.  
Where are you?

Come over here.  
I'm right here.

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me.

Thou shalt buy this  
dear

If ever I thy face by daylight see:

Now go thy way.

Faintness constraineth me  
To measure out my length on this cold bed.  
By day's approach look to be visited.

*Lies down and sleeps.*

*Enter Helena.*

HELENA

O weary night, O long and tedious night,  
Abate thy hours!

Shine, comforts, from the east,  
That I may back to Athens by daylight,  
From these that my poor company detest.  
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's  
eye,  
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

*Sleeps.*

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.

*Enter Hermia.*

No — you're making a fool of me.

You'll pay dearly for this if I ever see your face in  
daylight.

Go on, then.

Exhaustion is forcing me to stretch out full  
length on this cold ground.  
Expect a visit from me at first light.

What a wearisome night, so long and dragging.  
Cut your hours short.

Shine out from the east, comforts of daylight, so  
I can get back to Athens and away from these  
people who can't stand my company.  
And sleep, which sometimes closes sorrow's  
eyes, steal me away for a while from my own  
company.

Only three?

Come on, one more.  
Two of each makes four.  
And here she comes, bad-tempered and  
miserable.  
Cupid is a wicked boy, driving poor women mad  
like this.

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!

*Lies down.*

PUCK

On the ground  
Sleep sound.  
I'll apply  
To your eye,  
Gentle lover, remedy.

*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eye.*

PUCK

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;  
Nought shall go ill;  
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall  
be well.

*Exit Puck.*

I've never been so exhausted, never so wretched  
— soaked with dew, scratched to pieces by  
briers.

I can't crawl any further, can't go another step.  
My legs can't keep up with what I want.  
I'll rest here until daybreak.  
And heaven protect Lysander, if those two really  
mean to fight.

On the ground, sleep soundly.

To your eye, gentle lover, I'll apply the cure.

When you wake, you'll take real delight in the  
sight of your old sweetheart's eyes.

And the country proverb — that every man  
should take what's his own — will be proved  
true when you wake.  
Jack shall have Jill, nothing shall go wrong, the  
man shall get his mare back, and all will be well.

# Act 4, Scene 1

## THE WOOD

Titania fusses over Bottom in her bower until they fall asleep together, and Oberon — having got the Indian boy from her while she was besotted — takes pity and lifts the spell. The reconciled fairy king and queen depart before dawn, and Theseus's hunting party finds the four lovers asleep on the ground; Demetrius now loves Helena, so Theseus overrules Egeus and declares that both couples will be married alongside him that day. Bottom wakes alone with his ass's head gone and resolves to have Peter Quince turn his half-remembered night into a ballad.

### Original

### Translation

*Lysander, Demetrius, Helena and Hermia still asleep.*

*Enter Titania and Bottom; Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed and other Fairies attending; Oberon behind, unseen.*

TITANIA

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

Come and sit down on this bed of flowers while  
I stroke your lovely cheeks, and stick musk-roses  
in your sleek, smooth head, and kiss your  
beautiful big ears, my gentle darling.

BOTTOM

Where's Peaseblossom?

Where's Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

Ready.

BOTTOM

Scratch my head, Peaseblossom.

Scratch my head, Peaseblossom.

Where's

Monsieur Cobweb?

Where's Monsieur Cobweb?

COBWEB

Ready.

Ready.

BOTTOM

Monsieur Cobweb; good monsieur, get you your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag.

Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur;

and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not;

I would be loath to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior.

Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDEED

Ready.

BOTTOM

Give me your neaf, Monsieur Mustardseed.

Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur.

MUSTARDEED

What's your will?

BOTTOM

Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalry Cobweb to scratch.

Monsieur Cobweb — good monsieur, take your weapon in hand and kill me a red-hipped bumblebee on top of a thistle, and then, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag.

Don't overexert yourself in the operation, monsieur.

And good monsieur, take care the honey-bag doesn't burst;

I'd hate to see you flooded with a honey-bag, signior.

Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

Ready.

Give me your fist, Monsieur Mustardseed.

Please, no need to bow, good monsieur.

What would you like?

Nothing, good monsieur, except to help Cavalry Cobweb with the scratching.

I must  
to the barber's, monsieur, for methinks I am  
marvellous 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 us  
have the tongs and the  
bones.

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

Truly, a peck of provender;

I could munch your  
good dry oats.

Methinks

I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay,  
sweet hay, hath no  
fellow.

I ought to visit the barber, monsieur — it seems  
to me I've gone marvellously hairy about the  
face.

And I'm such a delicate ass that if a hair so  
much as tickles me, I have to scratch.

Well, sweet love, would you like some music?

I've got a reasonably good ear for music.

Let's have the tongs and bones.

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

Honestly, a bushel of fodder.

I could munch some of your good dry oats.

In fact I have a great craving for a bundle of hay  
— good hay, sweet hay, there's nothing like it.

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas.

But, I pray you, let  
none of your people stir me;

I have an exposition  
of sleep come upon  
me.

TITANIA

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.  
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.  
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist, the female ivy so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.  
O, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

*They sleep.*

TITANIA

Oberon advances. Enter Puck.

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin.

Seest thou this sweet  
sight?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity.

I have an adventurous fairy who'll raid a  
squirrel's store and fetch you fresh nuts.

I'd rather have a handful or two of dried peas.

But please, don't let any of your people disturb  
me

— I feel an exposition of sleep coming over me.

Sleep, then, and I'll wrap you in my arms.

Fairies, be off, scatter in all directions.

Just as the bindweed twines gently around the  
sweet honeysuckle, and the clinging ivy rings the  
elm's rough fingers — oh, how I love you! How I  
adore you!

Oberon comes forward. Puck enters.

Welcome, good Robin.

Do you see this charming sight?

I'm actually starting to pity her infatuation.

For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,  
I did upbraid her and fall out with her:  
For she his hairy temples then had rounded  
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;  
And that same dew, which sometime on the  
buds  
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,  
Stood now within the pretty flouriets' eyes,  
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.  
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,  
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,  
I then did ask of her her changeling child;  
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent  
To bear him to my bower in fairyland.  
And now I have the boy, I will undo  
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.  
And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp  
From off the head of this Athenian swain,  
That he awaking when the other do,  
May all to Athens back again repair,  
And think no more of this night's accidents  
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.  
But first I will release the Fairy Queen.

*Touching her eyes with an herb.*

OBERON

Be as thou wast wont to be;  
See as thou was wont to see.  
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower  
Hath such force and blessed power.  
Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

TITANIA

I met her a while ago behind the wood, out  
gathering presents for this hateful fool, and I  
told her off and quarrelled with her.  
She'd ringed his hairy temples with a crown of  
fresh, fragrant flowers,  
and the same dew that used to swell on the  
buds like round eastern pearls now stood in the  
eyes of those pretty little flowers like tears  
weeping over their own disgrace.  
Once I'd taunted her as long as I liked, and she'd  
meekly begged me to be patient, I asked her for  
the stolen child  
— and she handed him over at once and sent her  
fairy to carry him to my bower in fairyland.  
Now that I have the boy, I'll undo this hateful  
defect in her sight.  
And, gentle Puck, take that transformed head  
off this Athenian workman, so that when he  
wakes with the others he can go back to Athens  
and remember nothing of tonight's events  
except as the wild irritation of a dream.  
But first I'll release the Fairy Queen.

Be as you used to be; see as you used to see.

Diana's bud has this much power over Cupid's  
flower, and this much blessing in it.  
Now, my Titania, wake up, my sweet queen.

My Oberon, what visions have I seen!  
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

OBERON

There lies your love.

TITANIA

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

OBERON

Silence awhile.

—Robin, take off this head.

Titania, music call; and strike more dead  
Than common sleep, of all these five the sense.

TITANIA

Music, ho, music, such as charmeth sleep.

PUCK

Now when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's  
eyes peep.

OBERON

Sound, music.

*Still music.*

OBERON

Come, my queen, take hands with me,  
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

My Oberon — what visions I've had!  
I dreamed I was in love with an ass.

There lies your love.

How did all this happen?

Oh, how my eyes loathe the sight of his face  
now.

Quiet for a moment.

Robin, take off that head.

Titania, call for music, and let it strike all five of  
these sleepers senseless, deeper than ordinary  
sleep.

Music, there — music that charms people to  
sleep.

Now when you wake up, look out through your  
own fool's eyes.

Play, music.

Come, my queen, take my hand and let's set the  
ground rocking under these sleepers.

Now thou and I are new in amity,  
And will tomorrow midnight solemnly  
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,  
And bless it to all fair prosperity:  
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be  
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

PUCK

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

OBERON

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

TITANIA

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

*Exeunt. Horns sound within.*

*Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and Train.*

THESEUS

Go, one of you, find out the forester;  
For now our observation is perform'd;  
And since we have the vaward of the day,  
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.  
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go.

Dispatch I say, and find the forester.

Now you and I are freshly reconciled, and  
tomorrow at midnight we'll dance in ceremony  
and triumph in Duke Theseus's house and bless  
it with every good fortune.  
That's where these pairs of faithful lovers will be  
married alongside Theseus, in the middle of the  
celebrations.

Fairy king, listen and take note.  
I can hear the morning lark.

Then, my queen, in solemn silence, let's follow  
after the retreating night.  
We can circle the globe faster than the  
wandering moon.

Come, my lord — and as we fly, tell me how it  
happened that I was found sleeping here on the  
ground with these mortals.

One of you go and find the forester.  
Our May-morning observance is over, and since  
we still have the early part of the day ahead of  
us, my love shall hear my hounds in full cry.  
Unleash them in the western valley; let them  
run.

Hurry up, I say, and find the forester.

*Exit an Attendant.*

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,  
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear  
With hounds of Sparta.

Never did I hear

Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,  
The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seem'd all one mutual cry.

I never heard

So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THESEUS

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;

Crook-knee'd and dewlap'd like Thessalian bulls;  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each.

A cry more tuneable

Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.  
Judge when you hear.

—But, soft, what nymphs

are these?

EGEUS

We'll go up to the mountain top, my queen, and  
listen to the musical confusion of the hounds  
and the echo answering them together.

I was out once with Hercules and Cadmus when  
they hunted the bear in a Cretan wood with  
Spartan hounds.

I've never heard such magnificent baying —  
besides the groves, the sky, the springs and  
every place nearby all seemed to be crying out  
together.

I've never heard such musical discord, such  
sweet thunder.

My hounds are bred from the Spartan strain: the  
same heavy jowls, the same sandy colour, with  
ears hanging so low they brush the morning dew  
off the grass.

Bow-legged and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls,  
slow in the chase but pitched like a peal of bells,  
one voice under another.

A more tuneful pack was never cheered on with  
shouts or horns in Crete or Sparta or Thessaly.

Judge for yourself when you hear them.

But wait — who are these young women?

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

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their  
horns.  
Horns, and shout within. Demetrius, Lysander,  
Hermia and Helena wake  
and start up.  
Good morrow, friends.  
Saint Valentine is past.  
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.  
He and the rest kneel to Theseus.

THESEUS

I pray you all, stand up.  
I know you two are rival enemies.

My lord, this one asleep here is my daughter,  
and this is Lysander; this is Demetrius, and this  
is Helena, old Nedar's Helena.  
I can't imagine what they're all doing here  
together.

They must have got up early to observe the May  
rites, and heard about our plans and come to  
honour our ceremony.  
But tell me, Egeus, isn't this the day Hermia was  
to give her answer?

It is, my lord.

Go and tell the huntsmen to wake them with  
their horns.  
Horns sound and there is a shout offstage;  
Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia and Helena wake  
and jump up.  
Good morning, friends.  
Valentine's Day is long past — are these  
woodland birds only pairing off now?

Forgive us, my lord.  
He and the others kneel to Theseus.

All of you, please stand up.  
I know you two are rivals and 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 be  
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 follow'd them,  
Fair Helena in fancy following me.

How has this peaceful harmony come about,  
that hatred can lie down beside hatred and sleep  
with no fear of an attack?

My lord, I'll answer in a daze, half asleep and  
half awake — and I swear I still can't honestly  
say how I got here.

But I think, and I want to tell the truth — yes,  
now I remember, this is how it was:

I came here with Hermia.

Our plan was to get away from Athens to  
somewhere the Athenian law couldn't reach us.

Enough, my lord, enough — you've heard  
enough.

I demand the law, the full weight of the law on  
his head.

They meant to run off, Demetrius, and cheat  
both of us: you out of a wife and me out of my  
right to consent — my consent that she should  
be your wife.

My lord, lovely Helen told me about their escape  
and their plan to come out to this wood, and I  
followed them here in a rage, with Helena  
following me out of infatuation.

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 betroth'd 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 for evermore be true to it.

THESEUS

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.  
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.  
Egeus, I will overbear your will;  
For in the temple, by and by with us,  
These couples shall eternally be knit.  
And, for the morning now is something worn,  
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.  
Away with us to Athens.

Three and three,  
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.  
Come, Hippolyta.

*Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and Train.*

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

But, my good lord — I don't know by what  
power, though it must be some power — my  
love for Hermia has melted like snow. It seems  
to me now like the memory of some cheap toy I  
was obsessed with as a child.

All the loyalty and devotion of my heart,  
everything my eye wants and delights in, is  
Helena and nobody else.

I was engaged to her, my lord, before I ever saw  
Hermia.

I turned against her the way a sick man turns  
against food — but now that I'm well and my  
natural appetite is back, I want her, love her,  
long for her, and I'll be true to her forever.

You lovers have met at a fortunate moment.

We'll hear more of this story shortly.

Egeus, I'm overruling you: in the temple, along  
with us, these couples will shortly be joined for  
life.

And since the morning is getting on, we'll drop  
the hunt we planned.

Come back to Athens with us

— three couples, and we'll hold a great and  
solemn feast.

Come, Hippolyta.

All of it seems small and blurred, like distant  
mountains that have turned into clouds.

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

HELENA

So methinks.

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

DEMETRIUS

Are you sure

That we are awake?

It seems to me

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.*

*Waking.*

BOTTOM

When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer.

It's as if I'm looking at everything with crossed  
eyes, and everything's doubled.

That's how it seems to me too.

And I've found Demetrius the way you find a  
jewel — mine, and yet not really mine.

Are you sure we're actually awake?

It feels to me as though we're still asleep and  
dreaming.

Don't you think the Duke was here and told us  
to follow him?

Yes — and my father.

And Hippolyta.

And he did tell us to follow him to the temple.

Well then, we're awake.

Let's go after him — and on the way, let's tell  
each other our dreams.

When my cue comes, call me and I'll answer.

My next line is "Most fair Pyramus."

My next is

'Most fair Pyramus.'

Heigh-ho!

Hello?

Peter Quince!

Peter Quince!

Flute, the bellows-mender!

Flute, the bellows-mender!

Snout, the tinker!

Snout, the tinker!

Starveling!

Starveling!

God's my life!

God save me

Stol'n hence, and left me  
asleep!

— they've slipped off and left me asleep!

I have had a most rare vision.

I've had the most extraordinary vision.

I have had  
a dream, past the wit  
of man to say what dream it was.

I've had a dream beyond any man's wit to  
describe.

Man is but an  
ass if he go about to  
expound this dream.

A man is nothing but an ass if he tries to explain  
this dream.

Methought I was—there is  
no man can tell what.

I thought I was — nobody can say 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.*

I thought I was, and I thought I had — but any  
man who tries to say what I thought I had is  
nothing but a motley fool.

The eye of man has never heard, the ear of man  
has never seen, man's hand can't taste it, his  
tongue can't grasp it, nor his heart report what  
my dream was.

I'll get Peter Quince to write a ballad about this  
dream.

It shall be called "Bottom's Dream", because it  
has no bottom,

and I'll sing it near the end of a play in front of  
the Duke.

Perhaps, to make it more affecting, I'll sing it at  
her death.

## Act 4, Scene 2

ATHENS. A ROOM IN QUINCE'S HOUSE

Back in Athens, Quince, Flute, Snout, Starveling and Snug despair: Bottom has vanished, and without him "Pyramus and Thisbe" cannot be performed for the Duke — costing them all the pension they had hoped for. Then Bottom bursts in, restored and exuberant, refusing to say a word

about what happened to him. He tells them their play has been selected and hurries the company off to the palace with last-minute notes about clean linen, uncut nails and no garlic.

## Original

## Translation

*Enter Quince, Flute, Snout and Starveling.*

QUINCE

Have you sent to Bottom's house?

Have you sent someone to Bottom's house?

Is he come

Is he home yet?

home yet?

STARVELING

He cannot be heard of.

There's no news of him at all.

Out of doubt he is

There's no doubt about it — he's been

transported.

transported.

FLUTE

If he come not, then the play is marred.

If he doesn't come, the play is ruined.

It goes

It can't go ahead, can it?

not forward, doth it?

QUINCE

It is not possible.

It's impossible.

You have not a man in all

There isn't a man in all of Athens capable of

Athens able to discharge

carrying off Pyramus except him.

Pyramus but he.

FLUTE

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

No — he simply has the best brain of any working 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.*

FLUTE

SNUG

Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple,  
and there is two or three  
lords and ladies more married.

If our sport had  
gone forward, we had  
all been made men.

FLUTE

O sweet bully Bottom!

Thus hath he lost  
sixpence a day during his life;  
he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day.

An the  
Duke had not given him  
sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be  
hanged.

Yes, and the best figure too, and for a sweet  
voice he's an absolute paramour.

You mean paragon.

A paramour is — God help us — a shameful  
thing.

SNUG: Gentlemen, the Duke is on his way back  
from the temple, and two or three more lords  
and ladies have been married as well.

If our entertainment had gone ahead, we'd all  
have been made men.

Oh, sweet dear Bottom!

He's lost himself sixpence a day for the rest of  
his life.  
He couldn't have missed out on sixpence a day.

If the Duke hadn't 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!

O most courageous day!

O most happy

hour!

BOTTOM

Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me  
not what; for if I tell  
you, I am not true Athenian.

I will tell you

everything, right as it  
fell out.

QUINCE

Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

BOTTOM

Not a word of me.

And he'd have deserved it: sixpence a day for  
Pyramus, or nothing at all.

Where are you, lads?

Where are you, my hearties?

Bottom!

What a magnificent day!

What a happy hour!

Gentlemen, I have wonders to tell you — but  
don't ask me what they are, because if I tell you  
I'm no true Athenian.

I'll tell you everything, exactly as it happened.

Let's hear it, sweet Bottom.

Not a word out 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 garlick, 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.

All I'll tell you is this: the Duke has finished his  
dinner.

Get your costumes together, make sure your  
beards have good strings, and put new ribbons  
on your shoes.

Meet at the palace immediately.

Every man look over his part

— because the long and the short of it is, our  
play has been chosen.

Whatever happens, make sure Thisbe has clean  
linen,

and tell whoever plays the lion not to trim his  
nails, because they have to hang out as the lion's  
claws.

And, my dear actors, don't eat onions or garlic,  
because we need to breathe sweetly

— and I've no doubt they'll say it's a sweet  
comedy.  
Not another word.

Away! Go, away!

Off we go, off we go!

*Exeunt.*

## Act 5, Scene 1

ATHENS. AN APARTMENT IN THE PALACE OF THESEUS

At the palace, Theseus dismisses the lovers' account of the night as the work of imagination, but Hippolyta notes that all four minds were changed the same way. The three newly married couples watch Quince's company butcher "Pyramus and Thisbe," heckling the speaking Wall, the apologetic Lion and the disputed Man in the Moon until the two comic suicides are done. After the mortals go to bed, Oberon and Titania lead the fairies through the house to bless the marriages, and Puck ends the play by inviting the audience to treat it all as a dream.

### Original

### Translation

*Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, Lords and Attendants.*

HIPPOLYTA

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

It's a strange story, my Theseus, the one these  
lovers tell.

THESEUS

More strange than true.

More strange than true.

I never may believe

I'll never believe these old fables or these fairy  
fantasies.

These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

Lovers and madmen have such boiling brains,  
such inventive imaginations, that they perceive  
far more than cool reason can ever account for.

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

More than cool reason ever comprehends.

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet

The lunatic, the lover and the poet are made  
entirely of imagination.

Are of imagination all compact:

One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;

One sees more devils than all of hell could hold  
— that's the madman.

That is the madman:

the lover, all as frantic,

Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:

The lover, just as frantic, sees the face of Helen  
of Troy in a gypsy's dark features.

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,  
That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear?

HIPPOLYTA

But all the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigur'd so together,  
More witnesseth than fancy's images,

And grows to something of great constancy;  
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

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

THESEUS

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

LYSANDER

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

THESEUS

The poet's eye, rolling in a fine frenzy, flicks from  
heaven to earth and earth to heaven,

and as imagination gives body to things that  
don't exist, the poet's pen turns them into  
shapes and gives to airy nothing a fixed address  
and a name.

That's the trick strong imagination plays: if it so  
much as expects some joy, it invents a bringer of  
that joy.

Or at night, imagining something frightening —  
how easily a bush becomes a bear.

But the whole story of the night, told all the way  
through, and the fact that all their minds were  
transformed together, adds up to more than  
fantasy's inventions.

It grows into something solid and consistent —  
strange, certainly, and remarkable, but real.

Here come the lovers, full of joy and high spirits.  
Joy to you, dear friends — joy and fresh days of  
love go with your hearts.

And may even more of it attend your royal walks,  
your table and your bed.

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

PHILOSTRATE

Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS

Say, what abridgment have you for this evening?

What masque? What music?

How shall we  
beguile  
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

PHILOSTRATE

There is a brief how many sports are ripe.

Make choice of which your Highness will see  
first.

*Giving a paper.*

*Reads*

THESEUS

'The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung  
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.'  
We'll none of that.

Now then — what masques, what dances shall  
we have to pass the endless three hours  
between supper and bedtime?

Where's our usual master of revels?

What entertainments are ready?

Is there no play to relieve the agony of a slow  
hour?

Send for Philostrate.

Here, mighty Theseus.

Tell me, what have you got to shorten the  
evening?

What masque, what music?

How shall we cheat this idle time, if not with  
some amusement?

Here's a list of the entertainments that are  
ready.

Your Highness can choose which to see first.

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

We'll have none of that

That have I told my love  
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.  
'The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,  
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage?'  
That is an old device, and it was play'd  
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.  
'The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
Of learning, late deceas'd in beggary.'  
That is some satire, keen and critical,  
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.  
'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.'  
Merry and tragical?  
Tedious and brief?  
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow.  
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

#### PHILOSTRATE

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 rehears'd, I must confess,  
Made mine eyes water;  
but more merry tears  
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

#### THESEUS

What are they that do play it?

— I've already told my love that story, in honour  
of my kinsman Hercules.  
"The riot of the drunken Bacchantes, tearing the  
Thracian singer apart in their fury."  
That's an old piece, and it was performed when I  
last came home from Thebes as a conqueror.  
"The nine Muses mourning the death of  
learning, lately deceased in poverty."  
That's satire, sharp and biting; it doesn't suit a  
wedding.  
"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his  
love Thisbe: very tragical mirth."  
Merry and tragic?  
Tedious and brief?  
That's hot ice, that's remarkably strange snow.  
How are we to find the harmony in that  
contradiction?

There is a play, my lord, about ten words long —  
the shortest play I've ever come across.  
But it's ten words too long, which is what makes  
it tedious,  
because in the whole play there isn't one word  
that fits or one actor suited to his role.  
And tragic it certainly is, my noble lord, because  
Pyramus kills himself in it.  
I have to confess that when I watched the  
rehearsal it made my eyes water  
— but no fit of loud laughter ever produced  
merrier tears.

Who are these people who perform it?

PHILOSTRATE

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,  
Which never labour'd in their minds till now;  
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories  
With this same play against your nuptial.

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 stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain  
To do you service.

THESEUS

I will hear that play;  
For never anything can be amiss  
When simpleness and duty tender it.  
Go, bring them in:  
and take your places, ladies.

*Exit Philostrate.*

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,  
And duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.

Rough-handed men who work here in Athens  
and have never used their minds until now.  
And now they've strained their unexercised  
memories with this play for your wedding.

Then we'll hear it.

No, my noble lord, it isn't for you.

I've listened to the whole thing, and it's nothing  
— nothing whatsoever — unless you can find  
amusement in their intentions, stretched to  
breaking point and learned by heart at cruel  
effort, all to serve you.

I will hear that play.

Nothing can ever be wrong when simple people  
offer it out of duty.  
Go and bring them in.  
Ladies, take your seats.

I don't enjoy watching poor wretches struggle  
under a task too big for them, and devotion  
collapse in the attempt.

My sweet, you'll see nothing of the sort.

He says they can't do this kind of thing at all.

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 practis'd 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 pick'd 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.

*Enter Philostrate.*

PHILOSTRATE

So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.

THESEUS

Let him approach.

*Flourish of trumpets. Enter the Prologue.*

THESEUS

PROLOGUE

If we offend, it is with our good will.

Then it's all the kinder of us to thank them for  
nothing.

Our sport will be to make something of what  
they get wrong.

Where honest effort falls short, generous  
respect takes the intention for the achievement.

In places I've visited, great scholars have  
prepared elaborate speeches of welcome  
— and I've watched them shiver and turn pale,  
stop dead in the middle of sentences, choke on  
their rehearsed delivery out of nerves, and finally  
break off in silence without ever welcoming me  
at all.

Believe me, my love, out of that silence I still  
picked out a welcome, and I read as much in the  
modesty of frightened devotion as in the rattling  
tongue of bold, self-assured eloquence.

So affection and tongue-tied simplicity, in my  
judgment, say most when they say least.

If it please your grace, the Prologue is ready.

Let him come in.

PROLOGUE: If we offend, we do it with 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.

Consider then, we come but in despite.

We do not come, as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is.

All for your delight

We are not here.

That you should here repent  
you,  
The actors are at hand, and, by their show,  
You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYSANDER

He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt;

he  
knows not the stop.

A  
good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak,  
but to speak true.

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

That you should think we come not to offend,  
but with good will.

To show our humble skill, that is the true  
beginning of our end.

Consider then, we come in spite of you.

We do not come intending to please you.  
Our true intention is.

All for your delight we are not here.

That you should regret coming here, the actors  
are standing by, and from their performance you  
shall learn everything you are likely to learn.

This fellow pays no attention to his punctuation.

He's ridden his prologue like an unbroken colt

— he doesn't know how to stop.

A good moral there, my lord: it isn't enough to  
speak, you have to speak sense.

He really has played on this prologue like a child  
on a recorder: a sound, certainly, but not under  
control.

His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing  
impaired, but all  
disordered.

Who is next?

His speech was like a tangled chain — nothing  
missing from it, but everything in the wrong  
order.

Who's next?

*Enter Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall, Moonshine and Lion as in dumb show.*

THESEUS

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 rough-cast, 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  
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast (which Lion hight by name)  
The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,  
Did scare away, or rather did affright;  
And as she fled, her mantle she did fall;  
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.  
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth, and tall,  
And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain;

PROLOGUE: Ladies and gentlemen, perhaps this  
show puzzles you.

Go on being puzzled until the truth makes it all  
plain.

This man is Pyramus, in case you want to know,  
and this beautiful lady is certainly Thisbe.  
This man, covered in plaster and rough-cast,  
represents Wall — that vile wall which kept  
these lovers apart — and through Wall's crack  
the poor souls are content to whisper, which  
nobody should find surprising.

This man with the lantern, the dog and the  
bundle of thorns represents Moonshine,  
because — if you want to know — it was by  
moonlight that these lovers didn't mind meeting  
at Ninus's tomb to do their courting.

This ghastly beast, whose name is Lion,  
frightened away — or rather terrified — the  
faithful Thisbe when she arrived first by night;  
and as she fled she dropped her cloak, which vile  
Lion stained with his bloody mouth.

Then along comes Pyramus, sweet handsome  
youth, and finds his faithful Thisbe's cloak  
murdered.

Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;  
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
His dagger drew, and died.

For all the rest,  
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,  
At large discourse while here they do remain.

*Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion 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  
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 rough-cast, and this stone, doth  
show  
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:  
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,  
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

At which, with a blade — a bloody, guilty blade  
— he bravely stabbed his boiling bloody breast.  
And Thisbe, waiting in the mulberry shade, drew  
his dagger and died.  
As for everything else, let Lion, Moonshine, Wall  
and the two lovers explain it at length while  
they're here.

I wonder whether the lion is supposed to speak.

Nothing to wonder at, my lord.

One lion may speak, when so many asses do.

In this same play it so happens that I — Snout  
by name — represent a wall.  
And a wall of such a kind, I'd like you to think, as  
had a cracked hole or chink in it, through which  
the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe often whispered  
in secret.  
This clay, this rough-cast and this stone show  
that I am that same wall — that's the truth of it.  
  
And this is the crack, on the right and on the  
left, through which the frightened lovers are to  
whisper.

Could you ask plaster and horsehair to speak  
any better?

DEMETRIUS

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

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall;  
silence.

*Enter Pyramus.*

PYRAMUS

O grim-look'd night!  
O night with hue so black!  
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 holds up his fingers.*

PYRAMUS

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,  
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS

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

It's the wittiest partition I've ever heard hold  
forth, my lord.

Pyramus is approaching the wall.  
Quiet.

O grim-faced night!  
O night of such a black hue!  
O night, which is always there when day is not!  
O night, O night, alas, alas, alas, I fear my Thisbe  
has forgotten her promise.  
And you, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall, that  
stands between her father's land and mine  
— you wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
show me your crack, so I may squint through it  
with my eyes.

Thank you, courteous wall — may Jove reward  
you for it.  
But what do I see?  
No Thisbe do I see.

O wicked wall, through whom I see no  
happiness, cursed be your stones for deceiving  
me like this.

I'd have thought the wall, being able to feel,  
ought to curse him back.

PYRAMUS

No, in truth, sir, he should not.

No, truly, sir, he shouldn't.

'Deceiving me' is

"Deceiving me" is Thisbe's cue.

Thisbe's cue:

she

She's to come in now, and I'm to spot her through the wall.

is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall.

You'll see it works out exactly as I told you.

You shall see it  
will fall pat as I told you.

Yonder she comes.

Here 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 kiss'd thy stones,  
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

O wall, how often you have heard my groans for  
keeping my handsome Pyramus and me apart.  
My cherry lips have often kissed your stones —  
your stones bound together with lime and  
horsehair.

PYRAMUS

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

I see a voice.  
Now I'll go to the crack and see whether I can  
hear my Thisbe's face.  
Thisbe?

THISBE

My love thou art, my love I think.

My love you are, my love I think.

PYRAMUS

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

Think what you like, I am your lover's darling  
— and like Limander, I'm still faithful.

THISBE

And I like Helen, till the fates me kill.

And I'm like Helen, until the fates strike me down.

PYRAMUS

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

Not even Cephalus was so true to Procris.

THISBE

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

As Cephalus was to Procris, so am I to you.

PYRAMUS

O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

O kiss me through the hole in this vile wall.

THISBE

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

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

PYRAMUS

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

Will you meet me at Ninny's tomb right away?

THISBE

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

Come life, come death, I'll be there without delay.

WALL

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

So I, Wall, have played my part — and now that  
it's done, Wall walks away.

*Exeunt Wall, Pyramus and Thisbe.*

THESEUS

Now is the mural down between the two  
neighbours.

So now the wall between the two neighbours is  
down.

DEMETRIUS

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

No help for it, my lord, when walls are so  
headstrong as to listen without permission.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

This is the silliest thing I've ever heard.

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination then, and not  
theirs.

THESEUS

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, one 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 best in this line of work are only shadows,  
and the worst are no worse — so long as  
imagination fills them out.

Then it has to be your imagination doing the  
work, not theirs.

If we think no worse of them than they think of  
themselves, they may pass for excellent men.

Here come two noble beasts: a man and a lion.

You ladies, you whose gentle hearts are  
frightened by the smallest monstrous mouse  
that creeps across a floor, may now perhaps  
quake and tremble here, when a rough lion roars  
in his wildest rage.

So let it be known that I, one Snug the joiner,  
am a fierce lion — and not a lioness either.  
For if I came in here as a lion looking for a fight,  
my life wouldn't be worth much.

A very gentle beast, and one with a good  
conscience.

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

LYSANDER

This lion is a very fox for his valour.

THESEUS

True; and a goose for his discretion.

DEMETRIUS

Not so, my lord, for his valour cannot carry his  
discretion, and the  
fox carries the goose.

THESEUS

His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his  
valour; for the goose  
carries not the fox.

It is well;

leave it to his

discretion, and let us  
listen to the moon.

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

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

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present;

The very best beast, my lord, that I ever saw.

For courage, this lion is a complete fox.

True — and for discretion, a goose.

Not so, my lord. His courage can't carry his  
discretion, whereas the fox does carry off the  
goose.

And his discretion certainly can't carry his  
courage, since the goose doesn't carry off the  
fox.

Well, never mind

— leave it to his discretion, and let's listen to the  
moon.

This lantern represents the horned moon.

He should have worn the horns on his head.

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

This lantern represents the horned moon.

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

I myself appear to be the man in the moon.

THESEUS

This is the greatest error of all the rest;

That's the biggest mistake of the lot.

the man  
should be put into  
the lantern.

The man ought to be put inside the lantern

How is it else the man i' the moon?

— how else is he the man in the moon?

DEMETRIUS

He dares not come there for the candle,

He doesn't dare go in there because of the  
candle.

for you  
see, it is already in  
snuff.

As you can see, it's already smoking.

HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon.

I'm tired of this moon.

Would he would  
change!

I wish he would change.

THESEUS

It appears by his small light of discretion that he  
is in the wane;

Judging by the feeble light of his discretion, he's  
on the wane.

but  
yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the  
time.

But out of courtesy, and in all fairness, we have  
to sit it out.

LYSANDER

Proceed, Moon.

Carry on, Moon.

MOON

All that I have to say, is to tell you that the  
lantern is the moon; I  
the man i' the moon; this thorn-bush my thorn-  
bush; 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

Oh!

*The Lion roars, Thisbe runs off.*

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion.

THESEUS

Well run, Thisbe.

HIPPOLYTA

Well shone, Moon.

Truly, the moon shines with a  
good grace.

*The Lion tears Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion.

All I have to say is this: the lantern is the moon,  
I'm the man in the moon, this thorn-bush is my  
thorn-bush, and this dog is my dog.

Well, all of that ought to be in the lantern, since  
all of it is in the moon.

But quiet — here comes Thisbe.

This is old Ninny's tomb.

Where is my love?

Oh!

Well roared, Lion.

Well run, Thisbe.

Well shone, Moon.

Truly, the moon shines very gracefully.

Well pounced, Lion.

DEMETRIUS

And then came Pyramus.

LYSANDER

And so the lion vanished.

*Enter Pyramus.*

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!

O spite!

But mark, poor knight,  
What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?  
How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,  
What, stained with blood?

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come;  
Cut thread and thrum;

Quail, rush, conclude, and quell!

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

And then Pyramus arrived.

And so the lion disappeared.

Sweet Moon, thank you for your sunny beams.  
Thank you, Moon, for shining so brightly now,  
because by your gracious golden glittering  
gleams I trust I shall catch sight of the truest  
Thisbe.

But wait!

O horror!

But look, poor knight, what dreadful grief is  
here!

Eyes, can you see?  
How can this be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Your good cloak — what, stained with blood?

Come, you cruel Furies!

O Fates, come, come, cut the thread and the  
loose ends.

Crush, hurry, finish and kill!

That much passion — plus a dear friend actually  
dying — would come close to making a man look  
sad.

Curse my heart, but I do feel sorry for the man.

PYRAMUS

O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,  
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear?  
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame  
That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with  
cheer.  
Come, tears, confound!  
Out, sword, and wound  
The pap of Pyramus;  
Ay, that left pap,  
Where heart doth hop:  
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.  
Now am I dead,  
Now am I fled;  
My soul is in the sky.  
Tongue, lose thy light!  
Moon, take thy flight!  
Now die, die, die, die, die.

*Dies. Exit Moonshine.*

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

Less than an ace, man;

for he is dead, he is  
nothing.

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

O why, Nature, did you make lions, since a vile  
lion has ravished my darling here?  
Who is — no, no — who was the loveliest lady  
that ever lived, that ever loved, that ever liked,  
that ever looked cheerful.  
Come, tears, destroy me!  
Out, sword, and wound the breast of Pyramus  
— yes, that left breast, where the heart goes  
hop.

So I die, thus, thus, thus.  
Now I am dead.  
Now I have fled.  
My soul is in the sky.  
Tongue, put out your light!  
Moon, take your flight!  
Now die, die, die, die, die.

With no dice, only a single spot for him — since  
he's only one.

Less than one spot, man.

He's dead; he's nothing.

With a surgeon's help he might yet recover and  
turn out to be an ass.

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

THESEUS

She will find him by starlight.

*Enter Thisbe.*

THESEUS

Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

HIPPOLYTA

Methinks she should not use a long one for such  
a Pyramus.

I hope she  
will be brief.

DEMETRIUS

A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus,  
which Thisbe, is the  
better: he for a man, God warrant us; she for a  
woman, God bless us!

LYSANDER

She hath spied him already with those sweet  
eyes.

DEMETRIUS

And thus she means, \_videlicet\_—

THISBE

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

How is it that Moonshine has gone before  
Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

She'll find him by starlight.

Here she comes, and her big speech ends the  
play.

I shouldn't think she'd need a long one for a  
Pyramus like that.  
I hope she'll be brief.

A speck of dust would tip the scales between  
which is better, Pyramus or Thisbe: him as a  
man, God help us, and her as a woman, God  
bless us.

She's spotted him already with those sweet eyes.

And so she laments, to wit—

Asleep, my love?  
What, dead, my dove?  
O Pyramus, get up!

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,

Come, come to me,

With hands as pale as milk;

Lay them in gore,

Since you have shore

With shears his thread of silk.

Tongue, not a word:

Come, trusty sword,

Come, blade, my breast imbrue;

And farewell, friends.

Thus Thisbe ends.

Adieu, adieu, adieu.

*Dies.*

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted  
their fathers.

Speak, speak.

Completely dumb?

Dead, dead?

A tomb must cover your sweet eyes.

These lily lips, this cherry nose, these yellow  
cowslip cheeks, are gone, are gone!

Lovers, weep — his eyes were as green as leeks.

O you three Sisters, come, come to me with  
hands as pale as milk.

Dip them in gore, since you have cut his silken  
thread with your shears.

Tongue, not a word.

Come, trusty sword; come, blade, and drench  
my breast.

And farewell, friends.

So Thisbe ends.

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Yes, and Wall too.

No, I assure you — the wall that separated their  
fathers is down.

Will it

please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a  
Bergomask dance between  
two of our company?

THESEUS

No epilogue, I pray you;

for your play needs no  
excuse. Never excuse;  
for when the players are all dead there 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.

*Here a dance of Clowns.*

THESEUS

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.  
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.  
I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn  
As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

Would you like to see the epilogue, or hear a  
rustic dance performed by two of our company?

No epilogue, please.

Your play needs no apology — never apologize,  
because when all the actors are dead there's  
nobody left to blame.

Honestly, if the man who wrote it had played  
Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter,  
it would have made a fine tragedy — and so it is,  
truly, and very notably performed.

But come on, let's have your dance.

Forget the epilogue.

Midnight's iron tongue has struck twelve.  
Lovers, off to bed — it's nearly the fairies' hour.  
I suspect we'll oversleep tomorrow morning by  
exactly as much as we've stayed up tonight.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd  
The heavy gait of night.

Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity  
In nightly revels and new jollity.

*Exeunt.*

*Enter Puck.*

PUCK

Now the hungry lion roars,  
And the wolf howls the moon;  
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,  
All with weary task fordone.  
Now the wasted brands do glow,  
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 church-way 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 hallow'd house.  
I am sent with broom before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door.

*Enter Oberon and Titania with their Train.*

OBERON

This gloriously crude play has done a good job of  
shortening night's heavy crawl.

Sweet friends, to bed.

We'll keep this celebration up for a fortnight,  
with revels every night and fresh entertainment.

Now the hungry lion roars and the wolf howls at  
the moon, while the exhausted ploughman  
snores, worn out by his day's labour.

Now the burnt-down logs glow, while the  
screech-owl, shrieking loudly, reminds the man  
lying in misery of his own shroud.

Now is the hour of night when every grave gapes  
open and lets its ghost out to glide along the  
churchyard paths.

And we fairies, who run in the train of triple  
Hecate, fleeing the sun and following darkness  
like a dream, are merry now.

Not a mouse shall disturb this blessed house.

I've been sent ahead with a broom to sweep the  
dust from behind the door.

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.*

OBERON

Now, until the break of day,  
Through this house each fairy stray.  
To the best bride-bed will we,  
Which by us shall blessed be;  
And the issue there create  
Ever shall be fortunate.  
So shall all the couples three  
Ever true in loving be;  
And the blots of Nature's hand  
Shall not in their issue stand:  
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,  
Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
Despised 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;

Through the house give off a glimmering light  
from the dead and drowsy fire.  
Every elf and fairy spirit hop as lightly as a bird  
off a briar, and sing and dance this song after  
me, nimbly.

First run through the tune by heart, a warbling  
note for every word.  
Then hand in hand, with fairy grace, we'll sing  
and bless this place.

Now, until daybreak, let every fairy wander  
through this house.  
We'll go to the finest bridal bed and bless it, so  
that the children conceived there will always be  
fortunate.

All three couples shall be faithful in love forever,  
and the flaws Nature's hand leaves behind shall  
not appear in their children: no mole, no  
harelip, no scar, no ominous birthmark of the  
kind people despise in a newborn, shall be  
found on any child of theirs.

With this consecrated field-dew, let every fairy  
go his own way and bless each separate room  
throughout this palace with sweet peace.

And the owner of it blest.  
Ever shall it in safety rest,  
Trip away. Make no stay;  
Meet me all by break of day.

*Exeunt Oberon, Titania and Train.*

PUCK

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended,  
That you have but slumber'd 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.*

And let the owner of the house be blessed, and  
let it rest safe forever.  
Off you go, no lingering — all of you meet me at  
daybreak.

If we shadows have given offence, just think of it  
this way and everything is put right: that you  
were only dozing here while these visions  
appeared to you.  
And this feeble, trivial piece, which produced no  
more than a dream — don't condemn it, ladies  
and gentlemen.  
If you forgive us, we'll do better.  
And, as I'm an honest Puck, if we're lucky  
enough to escape the hiss of the audience this  
time, we'll make it up to you before long  
  
— or else call Puck a liar.  
So, good night to you all.  
Give me your applause, if we're friends, and  
Robin will make it up to you.

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