

ACT THREE

SCENE 1

TITANIA sleeps. Enter the clowns: BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

STARVELING

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

BOTTOM

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

ACT THREE

SCENE 1

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

BOTTOM

Are we all here?

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What is it, jolly Bottom?

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

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

STARVELING

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

40 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.

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ORIGINAL TEXT

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

Won't the ladies be scared of the lion?

STARVELING

I'm really worried about that.

BOTTOM

Sirs, you ought to think to yourself, bringing in—God forbid!—a lion amongst ladies is really terrible. There's no scarier wild bird than the living lion, and we should remember that.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

Bottom means to say "something to the same effect."

QUINCE

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

MODERN TEXT

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

SNOUT

Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

Bottom means "figure" (symbolize), not disfigure.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

Enter ROBIN unseen

ROBIN

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

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QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

(*as PYRAMUS*)

—odors savors sweet,

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.

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

And by and by I will to thee appear.

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Exit BOTTOM

ROBIN

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

Exit ROBIN

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

QUINCE

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

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FLUTE

(*as THISBE*) Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most briskly 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.

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ROBIN

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

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, come forward.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

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

BOTTOM exits.

ROBIN

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

ROBIN exits.

FLUTE

Am I supposed to talk now?

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

Oh, (as thisbe) As true as truest horse that yet would never tire.

Enter BOTTOM, with an ass's head, and ROBIN

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

Exeunt QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING

ROBIN

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

Exit ROBIN

BOTTOM

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

Enter SNOUT

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

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

ROBIN

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

ROBIN exits.

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT enters.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

Enter QUINCE

Exit SNOUT

QUINCE

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

Exit QUINCE

BOTTOM

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

(sings)

*The ouzel cock, so black of hue
With orange-tawny bill,
The thrushle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill—*

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TITANIA

(waking) What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM

(sings)

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plainsong cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
And dares not answer "Nay"—*

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE enters.

SNOUT exits.

QUINCE

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

QUINCE exits.

BOTTOM

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

(singing)

*The blackbird with its black feathers
And its orange-and-tan beak,
The thrush with its clear voice,
The wren with its small, piping chirp—*

TITANIA

(waking up) What angel is this who's waking me up from my bed of flowers?

BOTTOM

(singing)

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The gray cuckoo with his simple song
That many men hear
But they don't dare say no to it—*

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ORIGINAL TEXT

MODERN TEXT

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

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 enamored of thy note.
So is mine eye entrall'd to thy shape.
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

BOTTOM

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

Of course they don't say "no"! Who'd waste his time talking to such a stupid bird? Who'd bother to accuse a bird of lying, even if the bird were telling him that his wife was cheating on him?

→ Cuckoos symbolize cuckolds (men whose wives cheat on them). The cuckoo's song was sometimes imagined as a mocking accusation that the men who hear it are cuckolds.

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

Enter four fairies: PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDEED

PEASEBLOSSOM
Ready.

COBWEB
And I.

MOTH
And I.

MUSTARDEED
And I.

ALL
Where shall we go?

TITANIA
Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes.
145 Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes
To have my love to bed and to arise.
150 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
Hail.

MUSTARDEED
Hail.

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

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

Four fairies—PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDEED—enter.

PEASEBLOSSOM
Ready.

COBWEB
Me too.

MOTH
Me too.

MUSTARDEED
And me too.

ALL
Where should we go?

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

PEASEBLOSSOM
Hello, mortal!

COBWEB
Hello!

MOTH
Hello!

MUSTARDEED
Hello!

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

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.—

160 Your name, honest gentleman?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

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MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well.

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

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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.

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*Exeunt***NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE**

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

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

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

They all exit.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE**ACT 3, SCENE 2***Enter OBERON, King of Fairies, solus*

OBERON

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

Enter ROBIN

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

5

ROBIN

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

15

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.

20

*25

OBERON

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

ROBIN enters.

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

ROBIN

My mistress Titania is in love with a monster. While
she was sleeping in her bed of flowers, a group of bum-
bling idiots, rough workmen from Athens, got
together nearby to rehearse some play they plan to
perform on Theseus's wedding day. The stupidest
one, who played Pyramus in their play, finished his
scene and went to sit in the bushes to wait for his next
cue. I took that opportunity to stick a donkey's head
on him. When it was time for him to go back onstage
and talk to his Thisbe, he came out of the bushes and
everyone saw him. His friends ran away as fast as
ducks scatter when they hear a hunter's gunshot. One
of them was so frightened when he heard my footsteps
that he yelled, "Murder!" and called for help from
Athens. They were all so afraid that they completely
lost their common sense. They started to become
scared of inanimate objects, terrified by the thorns
and briars that catch at their clothing and pull off their
sleeves and hats. I led them on in this frightened, dis-

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

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 yelders all things catch.
 I led them on in this distracted fear
 And left sweet Pyramus translated there.
 When in that moment so it came to pass,
 Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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.

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

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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

The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole Earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the center creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him.
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA

Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou drivest me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never numbered among men!
Oh, once tell true, tell true even for my sake—
Durst thou have looked upon him being awake,
And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it, for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

An if I could, what should I get therefore?

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

and kill me, too. He was more faithful to me than the sun is to the daytime. Would he have snuck away from me while I was asleep? I'll believe that when I believe that there's a hole through the center of the earth, and the moon has passed all the way through to the other side. The only possibility is that you've murdered him. A murderer should look like you do, so pale and grim.

DEMETRIUS

That's how someone who's been murdered should look, and that's how I look. You've pierced me through the heart with your cruelty, and yet you, the murderer, look as bright and clear as a star in the sky.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I would rather feed his corpse to my dogs.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

Then please tell me he's all right.

DEMETRIUS

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

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.

80

Exit HERMIA

DEMETRIUS

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

85

OBERON

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

90

ROBIN

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

OBERON

About the wood go swifter than the wind,
 And Helena of Athens look thou find—
 All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
 With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.
 By some illusion see thou bring her here.
 I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

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ROBIN

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

100

Exit ROBIN

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HERMIA

The privilege of never seeing me again. And now I'm
 going to leave your despised company. You'll never
 see me again, whether or not he's dead.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS

I can't go after her when she's in a rage like this. So I'll
 stay here for a while. Sadness gets worse when you
 haven't had enough sleep. I'll try to sleep a little here.
(DEMETRIUS lies down and falls asleep)

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What have you done? You've made a mis-
 take and put the love-juice on someone else, someone
 who was truly in love. Because of your mistake some-
 one's true love must have turned bad, instead of this
 man's false love being turned into a true love.

ROBIN

In that case, it must be fate. That's the way of the
 world. For every man who's faithful to his true love, a
 million end up running after a different lover.

OBERON

Go around the forest, moving faster than the wind,
 and make sure you find Helena of Athens.—She's
 lovesick, and her face is pale from all the sighing she's
 been doing, because sighing is bad for the blood.
 Bring her here with some trick or illusion, and I'll put
 the charm on his eyes for when she comes.

ROBIN

I go, I go, look at me go—faster than an arrow from a
 Tartar's bow.

The Tartars were a
 people from Asia
 Minor famous for
 their archery.

ROBIN exits

OBERON

(squeezing flower juice into DEMETRIUS's eyes)

Flower of this purple dye,

Hit with Cupid's archery,

Sink in apple of his eye.

When his love he doth espy,

Let her shine as gloriously

As the Venus of the sky.

When thou wakest, if she be by,

Beg of her for remedy.

105

Enter ROBIN

ROBIN

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!

110

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OBERON

Stand aside. The noise they make

Will cause Demetrius to awake.

ROBIN

Then will two at once woo one.

That must needs be sport alone.

And those things do best please me

That befall preposterously.

120

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.

125

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OBERON

(putting flower juice on DEMETRIUS's eyelids)

You purple flower, hit by Cupid's arrow, sink into the pupils of this man's eyes. When he sees the girl he should love, make her seem as bright to him as the evening star. Young man, when you wake up, if she's nearby, beg her to cure your lovesickness.

ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Helena is nearby, boss. The young man who I mistook for this one is there too, begging her to love him. Should we watch this ridiculous scene? Lord, what fools these mortals are!

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

LYSANDER and HELENA enter.

LYSANDER

Why do you think I'm making fun of you when I tell you I love you? People don't cry when they're mocking someone. Look, when I swear that I love you, I cry, and when someone cries while he's making a promise, he's

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

HELENA

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.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

O spite! O 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

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

usually telling the truth. How can it seem like I'm making fun of you, when my tears prove that I'm sincere?

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

Damn it! I see you're all determined to gang up on me for a few laughs. If you had any manners at all, you wouldn't treat me like this. Can't you just hate me, as I know you do? Do you have to get together to humiliate me too? If you were real men, as you pretend to be, you wouldn't treat a lady this way, making vows and promises and praising my beauty when I know you're really both disgusted by me. You're competing for

To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.

You both are rivals, and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena—

A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,

To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes

With your derision! None of noble sort

Would so offend a virgin, and extort

A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.

For you love Hermia. This you know I know.

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

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

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,

Whom I do love and will do till my death.

HELENA

Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.

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

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,

And now to Helen is it home returned,

There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,

Lest to thy peril thou 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.

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

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

Helena, it's not true.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

It's hard to see clearly in the dark of night, but it's easier to hear well. I couldn't see you, Lysander, but I

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.

Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee know

The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoined all three

To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.—

Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!

Have you conspired, have you with these contrived

To bait me with this foul derision?

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

For parting us—oh, is it all forgot?

All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needles created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

Both warbling of one song, both in one key,

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

Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry—seeming parted

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heard your voice, and that's how I found you. Why did you leave me alone so unkindly?

LYSANDER

Why stay when love tells you to go?

HERMIA

But what love could make my Lysander leave me?

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

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But yet an union in partition—

Two lovely berries molded on one stem;

So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,

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.

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HERMIA

I am amazèd at your passionate words.

I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,

To follow me and praise my eyes and face?

And made your other love, Demetrius—

Who even but now did spurn me with his foot—

To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,

Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this

To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander

Deny your love, so rich within his soul,

And tender me, forsooth, affection,

But by your setting on, by your consent?

What though I be not so in grace as you—

So hung upon with love, so fortunate—

But miserable most, to love unloved?

This you should pity rather than despise.

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HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,

Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,

Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up—

This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.

If you have any pity, grace, or manners,

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joining these men to insult your poor friend? It's not friendly, and it's not ladylike. All women would be angry with you for doing it, even though I'm the only one who's hurt by it.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

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

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LYSANDER

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

HELENA

Oh, excellent!

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER)

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

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.

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DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

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DEMETRIUS

Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

(holds LYSANDER back)

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Away, you Ethiopel!

DEMETRIUS

(to HERMIA)

No, no. He'll

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

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

That's a good one.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

You're on. Let's do it.

HERMIA

Lysander, where are you going with all this?
(she holds LYSANDER back)

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get away, you African!

DEMETRIUS

(to HERMIA) No, no. He'll act like he's going to break

Seem to break loose.

(to LYSANDER)

Take on as you would follow,
But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

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HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

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DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER)

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me? Wherefore? O me! What news, my love?
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

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Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.
Why then, you left me—Oh, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

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LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

Are you joking?

HELENA

Of course he is, and so are you.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

I certainly did, and I never wanted to see you again. So
stop hoping and wondering what I mean. I've spelled

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.

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HERMIA

O me!

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

You thief of love! What, have you come by night

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

HELENA

Fine, i' faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,

No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear

Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

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

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why so?—Ay, that way goes the game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare

Between our statures. She hath urged her height,

And with her personage, her tall personage,

Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.—

And are you grown so high in his esteem

Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak.

How low am I? I am not yet so low

But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS)

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,

Let her not hurt me. I was never cursed.

I have no gift at all in shrewishness.

I am a right maid for my cowardice.

Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,

Because she is something lower than myself,

That I can match her.

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

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HERMIA

"Lower"? Hark, again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.

I evermore did love you, Hermia,

Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—

Save that, in love unto Demetrius,

I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

He followed you. For love I followed him.

But he hath chid me hence and threatened me

To strike me, spurn me—nay, to kill me too.

And now, so you will let me quiet go,

To Athens will I bear my folly back

And follow you no further. Let me go.

You see how simple and how fond I am.

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HERMIA

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

HELENA

A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?

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HELENA

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER)

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

HELENA

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

She was a vixen when she went to school.

And though she be but little, she is fierce.

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HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "low" and "little"!—

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

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HERMIA

"Shorter!" See, she's doing it again!

HELENA

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

HERMIA

Well, get out of here then! What's keeping you?

HELENA

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

HERMIA

What, you're leaving it with Lysander?

HELENA

No, with Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER) That's right, Hermia won't hurt Helena even if you try to help her.

HELENA

Oh, when you get her angry, she's a good fighter, and vicious too. She was a hellcat in school. And she's fierce, even though she's little.

HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "little" and "short"!—Why are you letting her insult me like this? Let me at her!

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LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get you gone, you dwarf,
You minims of hindering knotgrass made,
You bead, you acorn!

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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.

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LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS

HERMIA

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

340

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.

HERMIA

I am amazed and know not what to say.

Exit HELENA

OBERON

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

345

Exit HERMIA

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get lost, you dwarf, you tiny little weed,
You scrap, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS

You're doing too much to defend a woman who wants
nothing to do with you. Leave Hermia alone. Don't
talk about Helena. Don't take Helena's side. If you
continue treating Hermia so badly, you'll pay for it.

LYSANDER

Hermia's not holding onto me anymore. Follow me if
you're brave enough, and we'll fight over Helena.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.

All this fighting is because of you. Stay where you are.

HELENA

I'm not sticking around here any more. I don't trust
you. You might be a better fighter than I am, but my
legs are longer and I can run away faster.

HERMIA

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

HELENA exits.

OBERON

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

HERMIA exits.

ROBIN

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

350

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.

355

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
 Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong.
 And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.

360

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.

365

(gives ROBIN another flower)

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.

370

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.

375

112

O R I G I N A L T E X T

ACT 3, SCENE 2

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

M O D E R N T E X T

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ROBIN

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 crossways and floods have burial,

Already to their wormy beds are gone.

For fear lest day should look their shames upon,

They willfully themselves exile from light

And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON

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

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,

I will lead them up and down.

I am feared in field and town.

Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

Enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

OBERON exits.

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,

I will lead them up and down.

The people fear me in the country and the town.

Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one of them now.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

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

ROBIN

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

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS) Follow me then
To plainer ground.

Enter DEMETRIUS

Exit LYSANDER

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, speak again!

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER)
Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

Enter LYSANDER

Exeunt

LYSANDER

He goes before me and still dares me on.
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.
I followed fast, but faster he did fly,

ROBIN

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

LYSANDER

I'm coming.

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS enters.

LYSANDER exits.

DEMETRIUS

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

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) You coward, are you bragging to
the stars and telling the bushes that you want a fight,
but then you won't come and fight me? Come here,
you coward! Come here, you child! I'll beat you with
a stick. It would be shameful to fight you with a sword,
the way I would fight with a real man.

DEMETRIUS

Are you there?

ROBIN

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

LYSANDER enters.

They exit.

LYSANDER

He's walking ahead of me, and he keeps daring me to
follow him. When I reach the place he's calling from,
he disappears. This villain is much quicker than I am.
I ran after him fast, but he ran away from me faster, so

That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

And here will rest me.

(lies down)

Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.

(sleeps)

Enter ROBIN and DEMETRIUS

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER to DEMETRIUS)

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

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou darest! For well I wot

Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,

And darest not stand nor look me in the face.

Where art thou now?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER)

Come hither. I am here.

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear

If ever I thy face by daylight see.

Now go thy way. Faintness constraineth me

To measure out my length on this cold bed.

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.

(lies down and sleeps)

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

that now here I am in some dark part of the forest where the ground is uneven. I'll rest here. *(he lies down)* I hope the pleasant daytime comes soon! As soon as the gray light of early morning appears, I'll find Demetrius and get my revenge for this insult.

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

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

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER'S voice) Come here. I'm over here.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA *enters.*

HELENA

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

ROBIN

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

440

Enter HERMIA

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 and sleeps*)

445

ROBIN

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

450

455

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

Exit ROBIN

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120 ORIGINAL TEXT

ACT 3, SCENE 2

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ROBIN

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

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

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

ROBIN

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

ROBIN exits.

MODERN TEXT

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