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Source text:

The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Midsummer Night's Dream

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William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Simplified Edition by ChatGPT)

Part 1

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THESEUS — Duke of Athens

HIPPOLYTA — Queen of the Amazons, soon to marry Theseus

EGEUS — Father of Hermia

HERMIA — Daughter of Egeus, loves Lysander

HELENA — Loves Demetrius

LYSANDER — Loves Hermia

DEMETRIUS — Wishes to marry Hermia

PHILOSTRATE — Servant to Theseus

ATTENDANTS

ACT I

SCENE I — Athens. A room in the palace of Theseus.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and attendants.

THESEUS:

My dear Hippolyta, the day of our wedding comes near. Only four days remain

before the new moon. Yet time moves slowly for me. The old moon seems to stay too long, and it delays my joy like a cold guardian who keeps a young man from his happiness.

HIPPOLYTA:

Four days will pass quickly. Four nights will bring dreams, and soon the moon will rise again like a bright silver bow in the sky. Then it will shine upon our wedding celebration.

THESEUS:

Philostrate, go now. Wake the young people of Athens. Tell them to prepare games and happy shows. Let sadness belong only to funerals. Joy must fill our celebration.

PHILOSTRATE:

I will do so, my lord.

Exit PHILOSTRATE.

THESEUS:

Hippolyta, I once won your love in war. I fought you and took you by force. But now I will marry you with peace, with music, and with great joy.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

EGEUS:

Long life to Theseus, our noble Duke!

THESEUS:

Welcome, good Egeus. Why do you come to me?

EGEUS:

My lord, I come with trouble. I bring a complaint against my daughter, Hermia. Step forward, Demetrius. I have given my permission for this man to marry her. Now step forward, Lysander. This man has stolen my daughter's heart. He has given her poems and gifts. He has spoken to her at night and filled her mind with love. By clever words he has turned her away from obedience to me. According to the law of Athens, she belongs to me. If she refuses to marry Demetrius, I demand my right: she must either marry him or die.

THESEUS:

What do you say, Hermia? Your father should be like a god to you. He gave you life and shaped you. Demetrius is a worthy man.

HERMIA:

So is Lysander, my lord.

THESEUS:

Yes, he is worthy. But your father supports Demetrius, and that gives him greater claim.

HERMIA:

I wish my father could see with my eyes.

THESEUS:

You must learn to see with his judgment instead.

HERMIA:

My lord, forgive me if I speak boldly. Please tell me what will happen if I refuse to marry Demetrius.

THESEUS:

You must either die or live forever apart from men as a nun. Think carefully, Hermia. A quiet religious life is honored, but a woman who marries and shares love often lives more happily. You have time to think. By the next new moon, you must choose: obey your father, accept death, or live alone forever.

DEMETRIUS:

Hermia, change your mind. And Lysander, give up your false claim.

LYSANDER:

You have her father's love, Demetrius. Let me have Hermia's love. Marry him instead.

EGEUS:

She is mine, and all my rights over her I give to Demetrius.

LYSANDER:

My lord, I am equal to Demetrius in birth and wealth. My love is stronger, and Hermia loves me. Why should I not marry her? Also, Demetrius once loved Helena and promised himself to her. She still loves him deeply, yet he has turned away from her.

THESEUS:

I have heard this before. Demetrius, you and Egeus will come with me. I must speak with you privately. Hermia, prepare yourself to obey your father or face the law. Come, Hippolyta.

EGEUS:

We follow you with respect.

Exeunt THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, DEMETRIUS, and attendants.

Only LYSANDER and HERMIA remain.

LYSANDER:

My love, why are you pale? Why has your beauty faded so quickly?

HERMIA:

Perhaps because my eyes have no rain left. My tears have fallen too much.

LYSANDER:

True love has never had an easy path. Lovers often suffer because of family, age, or the wishes of friends.

HERMIA:

Yes, love is often controlled by others.

LYSANDER:

War, illness, or death can also destroy love quickly. Joy can disappear as fast as lightning.

HERMIA:

If suffering belongs to love, then we must learn patience. Trouble follows love like dreams and sighs.

LYSANDER:

Listen carefully. I have an aunt who lives far from Athens. She is rich and has no children. She loves me like a son. There we can marry, and the law of Athens cannot reach us. If you love me, leave your father's house tomorrow night. Meet me in the wood outside the city where we once met with Helena. I will wait for you there.

HERMIA:

My dear Lysander, I promise. I swear I will meet you tomorrow night at that place.

LYSANDER:

Keep your promise. Look — Helena comes.

Enter HELENA.

HERMIA:

Good Helena! Where are you going?

HELENA:

Do not call me beautiful. Demetrius loves your beauty, not mine. Your eyes guide him like stars. Teach me how you make him love you.

HERMIA:

I look at him with anger, yet he still loves me.

HELENA:

If only my smiles could work as your anger does.

HERMIA:

I speak harshly, yet he gives me love.

HELENA:

I pray kindly, yet he hates me.

HERMIA:

His foolish love is not my fault.

HELENA:

Your beauty is the cause. I wish that fault were mine.

HERMIA:

Take comfort. Soon he will not see me again. Lysander and I will leave Athens. Before I loved him, this city felt like heaven. Now love has turned it into sorrow.

LYSANDER:

Helena, we trust you with our secret. Tomorrow night we will escape through the city gates and meet in the wood.

HERMIA:

There we will leave Athens and find a new life. Goodbye, dear friend. Pray for our success, and may Demetrius love you again.

LYSANDER:

Farewell, Helena. May Demetrius love you as you love him.

Exit HERMIA and LYSANDER.

HELENA alone.

HELENA:

Some people are happy while others suffer. People say I am as beautiful as Hermia, but Demetrius does not see it. Love does not look with the eyes but with the mind, and love often makes foolish choices. Demetrius once swore he loved only me, but when he saw Hermia, his promises disappeared. I will tell him that Hermia plans to run away. He will follow her into the wood, and I will follow him. Even if it brings me pain, I will see his face again.

Exit HELENA.

End of Part 1.

Part 2

ACT I

SCENE II — Athens. A room in a cottage.

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

QUINCE:

Is everyone here?

BOTTOM:

You should call each man by name from the list.

QUINCE:

Here is the list of players chosen to perform a play before the Duke and Duchess on their wedding night.

BOTTOM:

First tell us what the play is about. Then name the actors.

QUINCE:

Our play is called The most sad comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe.

BOTTOM:

A very fine play and also cheerful. Now call the actors.

QUINCE:

Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOTTOM:

Here. Tell me my role.

QUINCE:

You will play Pyramus.

BOTTOM:

Is Pyramus a lover or a ruler?

QUINCE:

A lover who kills himself for love.

BOTTOM:

That will require strong feeling. I will make the audience cry. I could also play a fierce ruler very well, but a lover is good too.

QUINCE:

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE:

Here.

QUINCE:

You will play Thisbe.

FLUTE:

What is Thisbe? A knight?

QUINCE:

No. She is the lady loved by Pyramus.

FLUTE:

Please do not give me a woman's role. My beard is starting to grow.

QUINCE:

You will wear a mask and speak softly.

BOTTOM:

If faces are hidden, let me play Thisbe too. I can use a small voice.

QUINCE:

No. You must be Pyramus.

BOTTOM:

Very well. Continue.

QUINCE:

Robin Starveling, you will play Thisbe's mother. Tom Snout, you will play Pyramus' father. I will play Thisbe's father. Snug, you will play the lion.

SNUG:

Do you have my lines written? I learn slowly.

QUINCE:

You only need to roar.

BOTTOM:

Let me play the lion as well. I can roar so well that the Duke will ask me to roar again.

QUINCE:

If you roar too loudly, you will frighten the ladies, and we could be punished.

ALL:

Yes, we could all be punished.

BOTTOM:

Then I will roar gently, like a bird singing at night.

QUINCE:

You must play only Pyramus. He is a handsome man, and that suits you.

BOTTOM:

I accept. Which beard should I wear?

QUINCE:

Any beard you like.

BOTTOM:

Then I will choose later.

QUINCE:

Here are your parts. Learn them by tomorrow night. Meet me in the wood near the palace by moonlight. We will rehearse there so no one sees us. Do not fail to come.

BOTTOM:

We will meet and rehearse bravely. Goodbye, friends.

QUINCE:

At the Duke's oak.

BOTTOM:

Enough said.

Exeunt all.

ACT II

SCENE I — A wood near Athens.

Enter a FAIRY and PUCK from opposite sides.

PUCK:

Where are you going, spirit?

FAIRY:

I travel everywhere — over hills, through forests, across water and fire. I serve the Fairy Queen. I place dew upon flowers and care for her garden. I must gather drops of dew now, for the Queen will soon arrive.

PUCK:

The Fairy King holds a celebration here tonight. Take care that the Queen does not meet him. Oberon is angry because Titania keeps a beautiful child taken from an Indian king. He wants the boy to serve him, but she refuses. Because of their anger, the fairies hide in fear.

FAIRY:

Are you not Robin Goodfellow, called Puck, who plays tricks on people and laughs at them?

PUCK:

Yes, I am that happy spirit of the night. I enjoy making people laugh and causing small trouble. But step aside. Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY:

And here comes my queen. I wish they would not meet.

Enter OBERON with fairies, and TITANIA with her train.

OBERON:

We meet badly under this moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA:

Jealous Oberon! Fairies, leave. I refuse his company.

OBERON:

Stay. Am I not your lord?

TITANIA:

You are my lord, yet I know your actions. Why have you come here from far lands except to bless the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta?

OBERON:

How can you accuse me when I know your past love for Theseus?

TITANIA:

These are lies born from jealousy. Because of our quarrels, nature itself has fallen into disorder. Storms rise, crops fail, and seasons change wrongly. All this trouble comes from our disagreement.

OBERON:

Then change it. Give me the child.

TITANIA:

I will not. His mother served me faithfully and died after giving birth to him. For her sake I will raise the boy myself.

OBERON:

How long will you stay in this wood?

TITANIA:

Until after the wedding of Theseus. If you wish peace, join our dances. If not, avoid me.

OBERON:

Give me the boy, and I will go.

TITANIA:

Never. Fairies, away.

Exit TITANIA and her train.

OBERON:

Go then. You will not leave this wood until I punish you for this insult. Puck, come here. Do you remember when we heard a beautiful song by the sea?

PUCK:

Yes, my lord.

OBERON:

At that time Cupid shot an arrow meant for a pure woman, but the arrow fell upon a small flower and turned it purple. The juice of that flower causes deep love for the first creature seen upon waking. Bring me that flower quickly.

PUCK:

I will circle the earth in forty minutes.

Exit PUCK.

OBERON:

With this juice I will charm Titania while she sleeps. She will fall in love with whatever she first sees. Then she will give me the child. But who comes here? I will hide and listen.

Enter DEMETRIUS, followed by HELENA.

DEMETRIUS:

I do not love you. Stop following me. I search for Hermia and Lysander in this wood. Leave me alone.

HELENA:

You draw me after you, even though you are cruel. My heart follows yours.

DEMETRIUS:

Do I speak kindly to you? No. I tell you clearly that I cannot love you.

HELENA:

That makes me love you more. Treat me like your dog if you wish. Only allow me to follow you.

DEMETRIUS:

Do not push me further. I grow angry when I see you.

HELENA:

And I feel sick when I do not see you.

DEMETRIUS:

You risk danger by following me at night.

HELENA:

Your presence makes every place safe for me.

DEMETRIUS:

I will run away and leave you to wild animals.

HELENA:

No animal is as cruel as you. Still I will follow.

DEMETRIUS:

If you follow, I may harm you.

HELENA:

You already hurt me everywhere. Women should be loved, not forced to chase love.

Exit DEMETRIUS.

HELENA:

I will follow him anyway. Even suffering becomes heaven if it leads me to the one I love.

Exit HELENA.

OBERON:

Good girl. Before he leaves this wood, he will love you instead. Puck!

Enter PUCK.

OBERON:

Take some of this flower's juice. Find a young man wearing Athenian clothes who rejects a woman's love. Place the juice on his eyes while he sleeps so he will love her when he wakes.

PUCK:

Do not worry, my lord. I will do it.

Exeunt.

End of Part 2.

Part 3

ACT II

SCENE II — Another part of the wood.

Enter TITANIA with her fairies.

TITANIA:

Come, fairies, dance in a circle and sing me to sleep. Some of you protect the flowers. Some keep away the owl that cries in the night. Now sing softly, and then let me rest.

Fairies sing.

FIRST FAIRY:

Stay away, snakes and harmful creatures. Do not come near our Queen.

CHORUS:

Sing a gentle song. Let no harm or spell come near our lady. Good night, sleep in peace.

SECOND FAIRY:

All is safe now. One fairy stay awake to watch.

Exeunt Fairies. TITANIA sleeps.

Enter OBERON.

OBERON:

When you wake, whatever you see first shall be your true love. Whether it is a beast or strange creature, you shall love it deeply.

He places the flower juice on her eyes.

OBERON:

Wake only when something foolish stands near you.

Exit OBERON.

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.

LYSANDER:

My love, you are tired from walking. I have lost our way in this wood. Let us rest until morning.

HERMIA:

Yes, let us rest. Find a place for us to lie down.

LYSANDER:

One bed will serve us both. One heart, one promise.

HERMIA:

No, dear Lysander. For modesty's sake, lie a little farther away.

LYSANDER:

Do not doubt me. My meaning is innocent. Our hearts are joined.

HERMIA:

You speak cleverly, but still keep your distance. It is proper for an unmarried man and woman. Good night, sweet friend. May your love never change.

LYSANDER:

Amen to that wish. Sleep peacefully.

HERMIA:

And may you rest as well.

They sleep apart.

Enter PUCK.

PUCK:

I have searched the forest but found no Athenian man until now. Here lies one wearing Athenian clothes, and beside him sleeps a woman. This must be the man my master spoke of. She lies far from him, perhaps because he rejects her love. I will place the charm upon his eyes.

He drops the juice on LYSANDER's eyes.

PUCK:

When you wake, love will drive away sleep. My work here is done.

Exit PUCK.

Enter DEMETRIUS running, followed by HELENA.

HELENA:

Stay, even if you kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS:

Leave me. Do not follow me.

HELENA:

Do not leave me alone in the dark.

DEMETRIUS:

Follow at your own danger. I go alone.

Exit DEMETRIUS.

HELENA:

I am tired from this foolish chase. Hermia is lucky wherever she lies, for Demetrius loves her beauty. But who is this? Lysander lies here. Is he dead or asleep? I see no wound. Lysander, if you live, wake.

LYSANDER wakes.

LYSANDER:

I would walk through fire for you, sweet Helena. Your beauty shines clearly before me. Where is Demetrius? That hateful name should vanish.

HELENA:

Do not speak so. Even if he loves Hermia, she loves you. Be content.

LYSANDER:

Content with Hermia? No. I regret the time I spent with her. I love you now, Helena. Reason tells me you are more worthy.

HELENA:

Why do you mock me? Have I not suffered enough from Demetrius' rejection? Must you also laugh at me?

LYSANDER:

I speak truly. My love belongs to you.

HELENA:

You insult me with cruel jokes. I believed you were kind, but now I see I was wrong. Farewell.

Exit HELENA.

LYSANDER:

She does not see Hermia here. Sleep there, Hermia, and never come near me again. All my love now belongs to Helena.

Exit LYSANDER.

HERMIA wakes suddenly.

HERMIA:

Help me, Lysander! I dreamed a snake ate my heart while you smiled. Lysander?

Where are you? No answer? You are gone. I will search for you at once, even if I die trying.

Exit HERMIA.

ACT III

SCENE I — The wood. TITANIA still sleeping.

Enter BOTTOM, QUINCE, SNOOT, STARVELING, SNUG, and FLUTE.

BOTTOM:

Are we all here?

QUINCE:

Yes. This open space will be our stage, and the bushes will hide us as a dressing room. We will rehearse exactly as we will perform before the Duke.

BOTTOM:

There are problems in our play. First, Pyramus kills himself with a sword. The ladies may be frightened.

SNOOT:

That is a serious concern.

STARVELING:

Perhaps we should remove the death scene.

BOTTOM:

No. We will add a speech explaining that no one is truly harmed and that I, Bottom the weaver, only pretend to be Pyramus.

QUINCE:

That is a good idea.

SNOUT:

Will the lion frighten the ladies?

STARVELING:

I fear it will.

BOTTOM:

Then the lion must explain he is only a man wearing a costume.

QUINCE:

Agreed. Another problem is moonlight. The lovers meet by moonlight.

BOTTOM:

Leave a window open so real moonlight can shine inside.

QUINCE:

Or someone can carry a lantern and say he represents the moon. Also, we need a wall because the lovers speak through a crack.

SNOUT:

How can we bring a wall?

BOTTOM:

A man can play the wall and hold his fingers apart to make the crack.

QUINCE:

Excellent. Now sit and rehearse. Pyramus, begin.

PUCK enters secretly behind them.

PUCK:

What simple people are these near the Fairy Queen's resting place? They prepare a play. I will watch and perhaps join their fun.

QUINCE:

Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, stand ready.

BOTTOM as PYRAMUS:

"Thisbe, sweet flower—"

QUINCE:

Say "sweet smell," not "sweet flower."

BOTTOM:

"Yes, sweet smell. I will return soon."

He exits briefly.

PUCK:

A strange actor indeed.

THISBE speaks her lines.

QUINCE:

Wait, you must not say everything at once. Speak only when it is your turn.

BOTTOM returns.

Suddenly PUCK places an ass's head upon BOTTOM.

The others see him.

QUINCE:

Monsters! We are haunted! Run!

All flee in fear.

PUCK:

I will chase them and frighten them through the forest, changing shapes as I go.

Exit PUCK.

BOTTOM:

Why do they run? They try to scare me, but I am not afraid. I will sing to show my courage.

He sings loudly.

TITANIA wakes.

TITANIA:

What voice wakes me from sleep? Sing again, gentle mortal. Your voice fills my heart with love. Your form is beautiful to my eyes. I love you from this moment.

BOTTOM:

That seems strange, lady, but love and reason rarely agree.

TITANIA:

You are wise and beautiful.

BOTTOM:

Not so wise, but I wish I knew how to leave this wood.

TITANIA:

Do not wish to leave. You shall stay with me. I will give you fairies to serve you. They will bring you food and care for you while you rest.

She calls her fairies.

TITANIA:

Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! Mustardseed!

Enter four FAIRIES.

FAIRIES:

We are here.

TITANIA:

Serve this gentleman kindly. Feed him sweet fruits and attend to all his needs.

FAIRIES:

Welcome, mortal!

BOTTOM:

I thank you kindly. What is your name?

COBWEB:

Cobweb.

BOTTOM:

I hope to know you better, Master Cobweb.

He greets each fairy politely.

TITANIA:

Come, lead him to my resting place. Care for him gently.

Exeunt all.

End of Part 3.

Part 4

ACT III

SCENE II — Another part of the wood.

Enter OBERON.

OBERON:

I wonder whether Titania has awakened yet, and what strange thing she first saw, for that creature she must now love deeply.

Enter PUCK.

OBERON:

Here comes my messenger. What news do you bring from the forest tonight?

PUCK:

My lord, the Queen has fallen in love with a monster. While she slept, a group of simple workers came to rehearse a play for the Duke's wedding. I placed an ass's head upon one of them. When the others saw him, they ran away in fear. The

Queen woke at that moment and immediately loved him.

OBERON:

This works even better than I planned. But tell me — did you place the flower's juice on the eyes of the Athenian man as I ordered?

PUCK:

Yes, my lord. I found him sleeping, and a woman lay near him. When he wakes, he must see her first.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA.

OBERON:

Hide yourself. This must be the Athenian.

PUCK:

This is the woman, but not the man I touched.

DEMETRIUS:

Why do you speak harshly to one who loves you? Why do you treat me like an enemy?

HERMIA:

I speak only in anger, but I could speak worse. I fear you have harmed Lysander. If you killed him while he slept, then kill me as well. He would never leave me willingly. You must have done something terrible.

DEMETRIUS:

You accuse me wrongly. I have not harmed him, and I do not know where he is.

HERMIA:

Then tell me he lives.

DEMETRIUS:

Even if I knew, why should I help you?

HERMIA:

So that you may never see me again.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS:

She is too angry to follow now. I will rest here a while. Sleep may ease my heavy thoughts.

He lies down and sleeps.

OBERON:

What have you done, Puck? You placed the charm on the wrong man. Now true love has turned false instead of false love turning true.

PUCK:

Then fate has decided it so. Many promises fail while one remains true.

OBERON:

Go quickly through the forest. Find Helena and bring her here. I will place the charm on this man's eyes so that he will love her when he wakes.

PUCK:

I go faster than an arrow.

Exit PUCK.

OBERON places the juice on DEMETRIUS' eyes.

OBERON:

When you wake and see your love, she will shine before you like a star.

Enter PUCK with HELENA.

PUCK:

Helena is here, and the man I enchanted follows her, speaking love. Shall we watch the confusion? Humans are such foolish creatures.

OBERON:

Stand aside. Their voices will wake Demetrius.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.

LYSANDER:

Why do you think I mock you? My tears prove my love is true.

HELENA:

You grow more clever in your tricks. These promises once belonged to Hermia. Your words carry no weight.

LYSANDER:

I had no judgment when I loved her.

HELENA:

And you have none now if you leave her.

DEMETRIUS wakes.

DEMETRIUS:

O Helena, perfect and beautiful! Your lips are sweeter than any fruit. Let me kiss you.

HELENA:

This is cruel. Now you both join together to laugh at me. You once loved Hermia, and now you pretend to love me only to cause pain. No noble man would treat a woman so.

LYSANDER:

You are wrong. I truly love Helena.

DEMETRIUS:

And I love her more than he does.

HELENA:

Enough! You both make fun of me. I know you still love Hermia. You have joined together only to mock me.

LYSANDER:

Demetrius, take Hermia. I give her up freely. Helena alone has my heart.

HELENA:

Never have I heard such foolish talk.

DEMETRIUS:

I no longer love Hermia. My heart now belongs only to Helena.

LYSANDER:

That is false!

Enter HERMIA.

HERMIA:

Lysander, I followed your voice through the dark. Why did you leave me?

LYSANDER:

Why should I stay when love calls me away?

HERMIA:

What love could pull you from my side?

LYSANDER:

Love for Helena, whose beauty lights the night more brightly than the stars. I left because I hate you.

HERMIA:

You cannot mean this.

HELENA:

Now I understand. You three have planned this together to laugh at me. Have you forgotten our friendship, Hermia? We grew together like sisters, sharing everything. And now you join them in mocking me?

HERMIA:

I do not understand what you say. I have not mocked you.

HELENA:

You encouraged them to praise me falsely. Though I am less loved than you, you should pity me, not laugh at me.

HERMIA:

I truly do not know what you mean.

HELENA:

Continue your false sadness and secret smiles. I will leave. Death or distance will end this pain.

LYSANDER:

Stay, Helena. Hear me.

HELENA:

How wonderful your acting is.

HERMIA:

Do not speak harshly to her.

DEMETRIUS:

If she will not listen kindly, I will defend her.

LYSANDER:

Your threats mean nothing. Helena, I love you and swear it with my life.

DEMETRIUS:

And I swear I love her more.

LYSANDER:

Then come aside and prove it.

DEMETRIUS:

Gladly.

They prepare to leave together.

HERMIA:

Lysander, what is happening?

LYSANDER:

Stay away from me.

DEMETRIUS:

He pretends courage. Follow if you dare.

LYSANDER:

Release me, or I will shake you off like a snake.

HERMIA:

Why are you so cruel? What has changed?

LYSANDER:

Your love? I hate you now.

HERMIA:

You must be joking.

HELENA:

Yes, both of you joke together.

LYSANDER:

Demetrius, I will meet you soon.

DEMETRIUS:

I do not trust your word, but come.

They exit separately to fight.

HERMIA:

What greater harm can there be than hatred? Am I not still Hermia? Why do you reject me?

LYSANDER:

I swear I hate you and love Helena.

HERMIA:

You thief of love! Helena, have you stolen his heart?

HELENA:

Do not attack me. I have always loved you as a friend. I only told Demetrius of your escape because I loved him. Now allow me to leave peacefully.

HERMIA:

Go then. Who stops you?

HELENA:

A foolish heart I leave behind.

HERMIA:

With Lysander?

HELENA:

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER (offstage):

Do not fear, Helena.

DEMETRIUS (offstage):

She shall not harm you.

HERMIA:

Again she calls me small! I will scratch her eyes!

HELENA:

Gentlemen, protect me. She is angry.

The quarrel grows louder as they chase one another through the wood.

OBERON steps forward.

OBERON:

This confusion must end. Puck, you must fix your mistake. Lead the men through the forest until they are tired. Separate them so they cannot fight. Then place the remedy on Lysander's eyes so he will love Hermia again.

PUCK enters.

PUCK:

I will do it at once.

OBERON:

When morning comes, all shall return to normal.

Exeunt.

End of Part 4.

Part 5

ACT III

SCENE II — The wood, continuing.

Enter PUCK alone.

PUCK:

Up and down through the forest I must go. I will lead these angry lovers apart until they grow tired. I will speak in different voices and confuse them, so they cannot find each other.

He calls out, changing his voice.

PUCK (as LYSANDER):

Demetrius! Where are you? Come fight me!

Enter DEMETRIUS.

DEMETRIUS:

I hear you, Lysander. Stay where you are!

PUCK (moving away):

Follow me if you dare!

DEMETRIUS runs after the voice.

PUCK:

Now I lead him farther into the dark.

He changes voice again.

PUCK (as DEMETRIUS):

Lysander! Coward, come back!

Enter LYSANDER.

LYSANDER:

You call me coward? Stand and face me!

PUCK (farther away):

Here I am!

LYSANDER runs in another direction.

PUCK:

So I draw them apart. Soon they will be too tired to fight.

Enter HELENA, weary.

HELENA:

My legs grow weak. I cannot follow them any longer. I do not know who speaks truth or lies. I will rest here upon the ground.

She lies down and sleeps.

PUCK:

Now comes the proud Hermia.

Enter HERMIA.

HERMIA:

Night grows darker, and I am alone. I cannot find Lysander. My strength fails me.  
I will rest until morning.

She lies down apart from HELENA and sleeps.

Enter LYSANDER, exhausted.

LYSANDER:

I cannot find Demetrius anywhere. My body is too tired to continue. I will sleep  
until day returns.

He sleeps.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

DEMETRIUS:

I searched everywhere but found nothing. Sleep now overcomes me. I will lie here  
and rest.

He sleeps near HELENA.

PUCK enters quietly.

PUCK:

Now all are placed as my lord desired. I must correct my mistake.

He places the antidote on LYSANDER's eyes.

PUCK:

When you wake, your former love will return, and all this strange night will seem

only a dream.

He looks at the sleeping lovers.

PUCK:

Soon morning will come, and everything will be set right.

Exit PUCK.

ACT IV

SCENE I — The wood.

TITANIA lies asleep beside BOTTOM, who still has the ass's head. Fairies attend them.

Enter TITANIA's fairies.

TITANIA:

Come, sit beside me, my sweet love. Fairies, bring him food.

BOTTOM:

I would like some dried peas if you have them. I also feel sleepy.

TITANIA:

Sleep, my love. I will rest beside you.

They sleep together.

Enter OBERON.

OBERON:

Now I see Titania loving this strange creature. My anger has passed. I will take pity on her and end this charm.

He approaches.

OBERON:

Music, softly.

Music plays.

OBERON touches TITANIA's eyes with another flower.

OBERON:

Be as you once were. See clearly again.

TITANIA wakes.

TITANIA:

My Oberon! What strange dream have I had? I thought I loved a terrible creature.

OBERON:

There lies the creature beside you.

TITANIA sees BOTTOM.

TITANIA:

How my heart now hates what once it loved!

OBERON:

Come, my queen. I have the boy I desired, and our quarrel is finished.

TITANIA:

Then let us dance together again in peace.

OBERON:

First, release this man from his enchantment.

OBERON calls PUCK.

Enter PUCK.

OBERON:

Remove the animal head from this mortal.

PUCK removes the ass's head.

PUCK:

Now he is himself again.

OBERON:

We will bless the marriage of Theseus before dawn. Then we return to our fairy world.

Exeunt OBERON, TITANIA, and fairies.

BOTTOM wakes slowly.

BOTTOM:

When my friends call me, I will answer. I have had a strange dream. I cannot explain it. It feels too wonderful for words. I will ask Peter Quince to write a song about it.

Exit BOTTOM.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and attendants with hunting horns.

THESEUS:

Go, friends, release the dogs. We will hunt in the forest this morning.

HIPPOLYTA:

The air feels calm and pleasant.

THESEUS notices the sleeping lovers.

THESEUS:

Who lies here?

EGEUS:

My daughter Hermia! And Lysander! And Demetrius with Helena.

THESEUS:

Wake them with music.

Music sounds. The lovers wake.

THESEUS:

Good morning. Why are you here together?

LYSANDER:

My lord, I cannot clearly remember. We came into the wood to escape the law, but now my thoughts feel confused, like a dream fading away.

DEMETRIUS:

My lord, my love for Hermia has disappeared. My heart has returned to Helena, whom I loved before. Now I wish only to marry Helena.

EGEUS:

This is madness!

THESEUS:

No, good Egeus. Since all agree, the law will not divide true love. I declare that these couples shall marry together with us today.

HERMIA:

My lord, we thank you.

HELENA:

My happiness feels like a dream.

THESEUS:

Come, follow us to Athens. The wedding feast awaits.

Exeunt all.

End of Part 5.

Part 6

ACT IV

SCENE II — Athens. A room in Quince's house.

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

QUINCE:

Has anyone seen Bottom? Our play cannot happen without him. He plays Pyramus, and no one else can do it as well.

FLUTE:

No one has heard anything about him since he ran away into the wood.

SNOUT:

If he does not return, we are all lost. The Duke will expect our play tonight.

STARVELING:

Yes, and we may lose the reward promised for the performance.

QUINCE:

We worked so hard to prepare. Without Bottom, everything fails.

Enter BOTTOM suddenly.

BOTTOM:

Where are my friends? Peter Quince!

QUINCE:

Bottom! Thank goodness you are safe! Where have you been?

BOTTOM:

Do not ask me questions. I have had the most wonderful dream that ever entered a man's mind. I cannot explain it. Words are too small for it. But no matter. Tell me — is our play still planned?

QUINCE:

Yes! The Duke's wedding takes place tonight.

BOTTOM:

Then gather everyone quickly. We must prepare at once. Our play will be the best ever seen. No man must eat garlic today, because we must speak sweetly. Let us go and get ready.

They exit together happily.

ACT V

SCENE I — Athens. A hall in the palace of Theseus.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, HERMIA, LYSANDER, HELENA, DEMETRIUS, and attendants.

THESEUS:

Now our wedding celebrations begin. What entertainment do we have for the evening?

PHILOSTRATE enters.

PHILOSTRATE:

My lord, several performances are prepared, but one in particular may please you. It is a play called The most sad comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe, performed by local workers.

THESEUS:

A sad comedy? That sounds strange. Who performs it?

PHILOSTRATE:

Simple men who worked hard to prepare it. Their effort is honest, though their skill may be small.

THESEUS:

Honest effort deserves reward. Let them perform.

HIPPOLYTA:

I fear it may be foolish.

THESEUS:

Even so, kindness is better than judgment. Let them enter.

Enter QUINCE as PROLOGUE.

QUINCE:

Noble Duke and honored guests, we present a play. If any mistakes occur, please remember we mean no harm.

THESEUS:

He has already apologized before beginning.

The players enter: BOTTOM as PYRAMUS, FLUTE as THISBE, SNOUT as WALL, STARVELING as MOONSHINE, and SNUG as LION.

PROLOGUE continues awkwardly, mixing words.

LYSANDER:

His speech makes little sense.

DEMETERIUS:

Yet his meaning is clear enough.

QUINCE exits.

SNOUT as WALL steps forward.

WALL:

I represent the wall through which Pyramus and Thisbe speak.

He holds fingers apart to form a crack.

PYRAMUS:

O wall, beautiful wall, show me the crack so I may speak to my love.

THISBE appears.

THISBE:

O Pyramus, I will meet you tonight by the tomb.

They part.

STARVELING enters as MOONSHINE carrying a lantern.

MOONSHINE:

I represent the moonlight.

THESEUS:

This explanation leaves nothing to imagination.

Enter SNUG as LION.

LION:

Ladies, do not fear. I am not truly a lion but a man playing a part.

HIPPOLYTA:

He reassures us well.

THISBE enters and sees the lion.

THISBE:

Ah! A lion!

She runs away, dropping her cloak.

LION exits.

PYRAMUS returns.

PYRAMUS:

What do I see? My love's cloak stained! She must be dead! O cruel fate!

He pretends to stab himself dramatically.

PYRAMUS:

Now I die. Farewell, my love.

He falls.

THISBE returns.

THISBE:

My dear Pyramus! Dead because of me!

She takes the sword.

THISBE:

Now I follow you in death.

She falls beside him.

THESEUS:

The play ends sadly, yet the effort is sweet.

HIPPOLYTA:

Their sincerity makes it charming.

THESEUS:

Let the players be rewarded.

The actors bow and exit happily.

THESEUS:

The night grows late. Lovers, it is time for rest.

All couples prepare to leave.

Exeunt THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, HERMIA, LYSANDER, HELENA,  
DEMETRIUS, and attendants.

The stage grows quiet.

Enter OBERON, TITANIA, PUCK, and fairies.

OBERON:

Now the human guests sleep. We will bless this house and these marriages so that  
love remains strong.

TITANIA:

Fairies, dance softly and bring peace to every room.

Fairies move through the palace.

OBERON:

May all children born here be happy and free from harm.

TITANIA:

May love remain faithful and gentle.

They bless the sleeping couples and depart.

All fairies exit except PUCK.

PUCK steps forward.

PUCK:

If we shadows have offended, think only this: you have slept and dreamed. All you have seen was only a dream. If you forgive us, we will make amends. Give me your hands if we are friends, and we shall restore peace before morning ends.

He bows.

[The End]