

3.1

*Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT and STARVELING.
TITANLA lying asleep.*

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Peter Quince!

QUINCE

What sayst 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?

STARVELING

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeared of the Lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

Masters, you ought to consider with yourself: to bring in (God shield us) a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living, and we ought to look to't.

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

A calendar, a calendar: look in the almanac. Find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Enter PUCK behind.

QUINCE

consulting an almanac

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 every one according to his cue.

PUCK

aside

What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?
What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor;
An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM

Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet.

QUINCE

Odours, odours.

BOTTOM

...odours savours sweet.
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.
But hark, a voice. Stay thou but here a while,
And by and by I will to thee appear.
Exit.

PUCK

aside
A stranger Pyramus than ere played here.

Exit.

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

O!
As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Enter BOTTOM with an ass's head, PUCK following.

BOTTOM

If I were, fair Thisbe, I were only thine.

QUINCE

O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters; fly, masters. Help!

Exeunt all except Puck.

PUCK

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.

Enter BOTTOM.

BOTTOM

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

Enter SNOUT.

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?

Exit SNOUT.

Enter QUINCE.

QUINCE

Bless thee Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated.

Exit.

BOTTOM

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

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

TITANIA

Wakes.

What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM

The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
The plainsong cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
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 enamoured of thy note.
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape,
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

BOTTOM

Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet to say the truth,
reason and love keep little company together nowadays; the more the pity that some
honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM

Not so neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to
serve mine own turn.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth tend upon my state,
And I do love thee; therefore go with me.
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep;

TITANIA (cont'd)

And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed!

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTE and MUSTARDSEED.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

MOTE

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

And I.

ALL

Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes.
Feed him with apricots and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs and mulberries.
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worms' eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal.

COBWEB

Hail.

MOTE

Hail.

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

BOTTOM

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

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

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

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

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 more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

TITANIA

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

3.2

Enter OBERON.

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 PUCK.

Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit? 5
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

PUCK

My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented in their sport,
Forsook his scene and entered in a brake,
When I did him at this advantage take:
An ass's noll I fixed on his head.
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my minic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So at his sight away his fellows fly;
And at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls,
He 'Murder' cries, and help from Athens calls.

PUCK (cont'd)

Their sense, thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch –
Some sleeves, some hats; from yielders, all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania 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?

PUCK

I took him sleeping (that is finish'd too)
And the Athenian woman by his side,
That when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.

OBERON

Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

PUCK

This is the woman, but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep
And kill me too.

HERMIA (cont'd)

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 centre 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 driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake,
Durst thou have look'd upon him, being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? 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

And if I could, what should I get therefor?

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so.
See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

Exit

DEMETRIUS

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

Lies down and sleeps

OBERON

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

PUCK

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

OBERON

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

PUCK

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

Exit

OBERON

Squeezes the flower on Demetrius' eyelids.

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.

Re-enter PUCK.

PUCK

Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand;
And the youth mistook by me
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON

Stand aside. The noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

PUCK

Then will two at once woo one:
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

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

Wakes.

O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealed white, high Taurus snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O let me kiss
This impress 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;
To vow and swear and superpraise my parts
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena.
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so,
For you love Hermia: this you know I know:
And here with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

HELENA

Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guestwise sojourn'd,
And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

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

Re-enter HERMIA.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide:
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all you 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 conjoin'd 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?

HELENA (cont'd)

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—O, 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 grow together
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
So with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

I am amazed 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

HELENA (cont'd)

Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

I do. Persevere, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up.
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER

Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse,
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena.

HELENA

O excellent!

HERMIA

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee, by my life I do:
I swear by that which I will lose for thee
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS

I say, I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come!

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER

Away, you **Ethiope**!

DEMETRIUS

No, no; he'll seem
To break loose, take on as you would follow,
But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr, vile thing let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

Thy love! out, **tawny Tartar**, out!
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.

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

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.
Since night you loved me, yet since night you left me.
Why then, you left me (O, the gods forbid)
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me, you juggler, you canker-blossom,
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stolen 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? Aye, 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

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

HERMIA

Lower? Hark again.

HELENA

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA

Little again? nothing but low and little?
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

LYSANDER

Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made,
You bead, you acorn.

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone. Speak not of Helena,
Take not her part. For if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt abide it.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

Exit

HERMIA

I am amazed, and know not what to say.

Exit

OBERON and PUCK come forward.

OBERON

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

PUCK

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

OBERON

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

OBERON (cont'd)

When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

PUCK

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards. Damned 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 wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for ay consort with black-brow'd night.

OBERON

But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And like a forester the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But notwithstanding, haste, make no delay.
We may effect this business yet ere day.

Exit

PUCK

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

Enter LYSANDER.

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

PUCK

Here, villain, drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

PUCK

Follow me, then,
To plainer ground.

Exit LYSANDER, as though following Demetrius.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, speak again.
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak: in some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

PUCK

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?

PUCK

Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

Exeunt

Enter LYSANDER.

LYSANDER

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

Shifting places.

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 PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

PUCK

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

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou darest. For well I wot,
Thou run'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

PUCK

Come hither: I am here.

DEMETRIUS

Nay then, thou mockest 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.

Lies down.

By day's approach look to be visited.

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

PUCK

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

Re-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.

Lies down.

Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!

Sleeps.

PUCK

On the ground
Sleep sound.
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
When thou wak'st,
Thou tak'st
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye;
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown.
Jack shall have Jill,
Nought shall go ill,
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

Exit PUCK.

The lovers remain onstage, sleeping.