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SHAKESPEARE'S

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

EDITED WITH NOTES BY

GERTRUDE LAWLER, M.A.

HEAD OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, HARBORD COLLEGIATE
INSTITUTE, TORONTO; AND CRITIC AND INSTRUCTOR IN
METHODS IN ENGLISH IN THE FACULTY OF
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INTRODUCTION

Date of Publication. — On October 8, 1600, Thomas Fisher issued the first printed edition of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*. That edition is known as Fisher’s Quarto of 1600. In the same year, James Roberts issued the second printed edition, known as the Roberts Quarto of 1600. The third edition of the play was in the First Folio of 1623.

Date of Composition. — In endeavouring to determine the date of the composition of a play by Shakespeare, evidence of three kinds is used. First, there is external evidence: such mention as fixes its limits or gives the exact date of composition, publication, presentation; or such reference as warrants a reasonable conjecture as to date. Second, there is external-internal evidence; reference in the play to facts whereof the dates are known. Third, there is internal evidence; such thought and form as indicate the amateur or the connoisseur.

External evidence as to the date of the composition of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* is furnished by the *Palladis Tamia* of Francis Meres. That work is dated 1590, and therein is mentioned *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare.

External-internal evidence regarding the date of composition of the drama has been detected. The line —

“Thorough bush, thorough brier,”

Act II. i. 3, occurs in Drayton’s *Nymphidia*, or *The Court of Fairy*, printed in 1593.
Titania's description of the perverted seasons, Act II. i. 88–117, is said to refer to the extremely unfavourable weather of 1593, 1594, and 1595.

"The three three Muses, mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary,"

Act V. i. 53, 54, may refer to Robert Greene, who died in 1592.

Finally, it is said that the play was written for the celebration of some noble marriage—probably that of the Earl of Southampton in 1598.

Internal evidence leaves no reasonable doubt that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies. It abounds in puns, conceits, and classical allusions—the usual marks of an apprentice.*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is the last and best of a group that includes *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

**Notable Performances. — A Midsummer-Night's Dream** has always been popular.

There was a notable performance of the play at the Bishop of Lincoln's house on Sunday, September 27, 1631—much to the disgust of Puritan England. After the Puritans closed the theatres, the play was abridged as *The Merry Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver*, and acted in private.

In 1692, the play was elaborately presented as an opera by Purcell under the title of *The Fairy Queen*.

In 1716, *A Comick Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe*, by R. Leveridge, was acted in London.

In 1755, Garrick produced at Drury Lane an opera entitled *The Fairies*, the rude mechanicals being omitted; and, in 1777, Coleman, under the title *A
Fairy Tale, by F. Reynolds, gave great pleasure to patrons of his theatre.

In 1816, a play in three acts restored the clowns to the delectation of Londoners.

In 1826, Mendelssohn’s famous music was written; and, at Berlin, in 1827, it was greeted enthusiastically.

In March of 1909, in Massey Hall, Toronto, the Ben Greet Company presented Mendelssohn’s version, accompanied by the great Russian Symphony Orchestra.

The Title. — Dr. Johnson says, “I know not why Shakespeare calls this play A Midsummer-Night’s Dream, when he carefully informs us that it happened on the night preceding May-day.”

Other critics have noted that Shakespeare’s Winter’s Tale deals with the sheep-shearing season, and his Twelfth Night with midsummer; and those critics have drawn the conclusion that seems satisfactory — the title is indicative of the time appropriate for the production of the play. But is it not possible and desirable to have a midsummer-night’s dream at any time?

The Plot. — The plot of A Midsummer-Night’s Dream consists of four stories ingeniously interwoven:—

I. The marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta;
II. The adventures of the lovers — Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius;
III. The rehearsal and performance of an interlude by Athenian handicraftsmen;
IV. The quarrel and reconciliation of Oberon and Titania.

The marriage of Theseus is the main action: on his wedding-day, Hermia’s fate was to be decided, and that decision involved Helena’s fate; for Theseus’
wedding festivities, Peter Quince worked diligently with his theatrical company; and, for Theseus' nuptials, Titania and Oberon were in Athens.

The First Story. — The wayward youth of Theseus is over: he has won the Amazonian queen, Hippolyta, by his sword; he is now a law-abiding king, and will be a loving husband as soon as four slow days have passed.

The Second Story. — Hermia and Lysander are in love; but Egeus, Hermia's father, wishes her to marry Demetrius, who until recently has been in love with Helena, a life-long friend of Hermia. Egeus appeals to Theseus, who rules that Hermia must submit to her father's will or be immured forever in a cloister. Hermia is granted four days to decide — her decision is to be given on Theseus' wedding-day.

Before the expiration of that time, Hermia and Lysander elope, and intend to take shelter with Lysander's aunt, who lives beyond the jurisdiction of Athens. Hermia and Lysander tell their intention and their trysting-place to Helena, who informs Demetrius. Demetrius follows the fugitives to prevent their marriage, and Helena follows Demetrius for the sake of his company to and from the trysting-place. By harsh words and threats of violence, Demetrius tries in vain to drive Helena from her pursuit of him. Oberon overhears their controversy, pities Helena, and sends Puck to anoint the eyelids of Demetrius.

Lysander and Hermia are forced by darkness and weariness to rest till daybreak in the woods. Puck finds them asleep and thinks that Lysander is the Athenian whose eyelids were to be anointed by Oberon's command. Near the mounds where sleep the lovers, Demetrius comes with Helena, and there frees himself
from her pursuit. Helena catches sight of the sleeping Lysander and awakens him. Immediately, he loves her madly. Helena, deeply offended, for she believes he loves Hermia, runs away, and Lysander follows her. Hermia awakes to find herself alone, seeks for Lysander, and comes upon Demetrius, whom she accuses of killing Lysander. Demetrius does not understand her accusation, refrains from pursuing her, determines to rest a little, and falls asleep. Oberon perceives the mistake that Puck has made, anoints Demetrius’ eyes, and sends the mischievous sprite in search of Helena, who enters with Lysander. Helena still thinks that Lysander is making fun of her in his amorous protestations. Their altercation awakens Demetrius, who immediately proclaims his love for Helena. Bewildered Helena thinks that Demetrius and Lysander have concocted a scheme to heap ridicule upon her. To complete the tangle, Hermia enters, and reproaches Lysander for neglecting her. When he tells her that he loves Helena, Hermia thinks that he is teasing Helena too much, and Helena thinks that Hermia has plotted with Lysander and Demetrius; but, when Hermia realizes that Lysander has changed, she chides Helena, and would beat her only for the interference of the men. Lysander and Demetrius withdraw to settle their claim to Helena by a duel, and timid Helena runs away from vixenish Hermia.

At Oberon’s command, Puck overcasts the sky; and, for his own delight, Puck has a merry time in leading Lysander and Demetrius up and down. Finally, Hobgoblin puts the four asleep and anoints their eyelids. The next morning, all is well; Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius, are contented lovers, and are married on Theseus’ wedding-day.
The Third Story. — That a few Athenian mechanics may present an interlude to grace the occasion of Theseus' wedding, Peter Quince, a carpenter, assembles his theatrical company at his own house and gives to each a part in *The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe*. He entreats, requests, and desires all to learn their parts by the next night, and to meet for a rehearsal at the duke's oak in the palace wood, a mile without the town. During their practice, Puck transforms Bottom, the star of the company, and the terrified Athenians flee. Bottom returns home just in time to have the interlude presented by the neophyte actors.

The Fourth Story. — Oberon and Titania, the king and queen of Fairyland, arrive from India, and live in the neighbourhood of Athens. They have come to be invisible guests at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. A quarrel about a little Indian boy whom Titania has adopted, and whom Oberon wishes to have as a page of honour, is still vexatious to both leaders and to their fairy bands. To win the boy, Oberon has recourse to the magic possessed by a little western flower. His attendant, Puck, procures the flower and squeezes its potent juice on the eyelids of sleeping Titania. As a consequence of the magic of the flower, Titania falls madly in love with the first living creature that she sees after her awakening. That creature happens to be the clown Bottom, upon whom Puck has fastened an ass's head. While she dotes on Bottom, Titania is indifferent to her Indian boy, and willingly parts from him. Oberon becomes sorry for Titania's predicament, takes the charm from her eyes, and joins her in amity to dance at Theseus' wedding and to bless Theseus and Hippolyta with all fair prosperity.
Sources of the Stories. — The play is one whereof no trace of the whole plot has been found in any preceding work.

Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's Lives gives two accounts of Theseus' marriage: according to the first, Theseus married the Amazonian prisoner — Queen Antiope; according to the second, the queen's name was Hippolyta. In *The Knight's Tale*, Chaucer uses the name Hippolyta; Shakespeare followed Chaucer.

The story of the adventures of the four lovers — Hermia, Lysander, Helena, Demetrius — is believed to be original. Elizabethans delighted in testifying to the magical properties of plants. It has been noted that the anointing of the eyelids with the juice of a flower is a device in George Montemayor's Spanish romance called *Diana*, and that the book was popular in a French translation in Shakespeare's England.

Shakespeare's knowledge of Pyramus and Thisbe was probably derived from Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Chaucer's *Tale of Thisbe of Babylon* is adapted from Ovid. Clement Robinson's *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a short poem wherein are parodied excessive alliteration, far-fetched conceits, and exaggerated vivacity.

Charles Lamb is credited with the statement that "Shakespeare invented the fairies." It seems that Shakespeare created the real fairies. What were called fairies were mere counterfeits and existed from time immemorial: such fairies as those of Grimm's *Mythology*, — dwarfs, gnomes, kobolds, lubberlouts, — charmless, rough, repulsive fabrications. True, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* had popularized fairies; but each of Shakespeare's fairies is his own duodecimo edition.
The Mortals. — Perchance there are mortals whose eyes, at Oberon's bidding, have been latched by Puck. To those mortals, Shakespeare's *Midsummer-Night's Dream* is, perforce, all loveliness. They are deaf to the exclamation —

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

To them, basking in the brilliancy of youthful imagination, the reading of the play is like a delectable wandering through enchanted groves, through ambrosial meads, in blissful dreams of fantastic illusions, magic spells, poetic caprices. Their passions are not powerfully aroused; their understanding is lulled to sleep; their senses luxuriate in delicate aerial fancy, wherein seeming confusion becomes exquisite harmony.

To them, the mortals of the play sing in idyllic poetry, or discourse in idiomatic prose. Neither the poetry nor the prose is purely objective, but is appreciably modified by the character of the particular speaker. The delighted readers salute proud, kingly Theseus and his warrior bride, find the royal pair not devoid of interest, and would not think of questioning the classicality of the huntress who revels in the chase, or of the hunter who knows equal sportive gaiety; such readers would advise Egeus not to be an absolute father; know Lysander from Demetrius; and do not find the relative heights of Hermia and Helena the only distinguishing mark of those sylph-like maidens. Such readers find the aristocratic, Greek-named personages poetic creations in an ideal forest near an ideal Athens.

The itinerant, histrionic companies of Attica must have had many prototypes of Peter Quince, the car-
penter, stage-manager, and dramatist; of discreet Snug, the joiner, who holds one idea at a time; of Flute, the bellows-mender; of Snout, the tinker; of fickle, consequential, melancholy, peace-keeping Starveling, the tailor, who questions the feasibility and propriety of everything proposed; and of Bully Bottom, the weaver.

There must have been many green-room squabbles, many woodland rehearsals, and many silly dramas. Life in Stratford-on-Avon was not very different from life in Athens. What matters it that it was seven hundred years after Theseus lived that Athens became a classical city? Bully Bottom lives everywhere and always.

Sweet Bully Bottom! Well may we laugh with Shakespeare when the youthful dramatist places the ass's head on thy shoulders! Thou presumptuous prince of grotesque clowns; thou personification of self-esteem; thou human epitome of all the conceited donkeys that ever strutted on the stage of life; thou officious meddler, thou more than Roman dictator, thou cham-like director,—how natural for thee to be an ass sublimely unconscious of thy monstrous deformity! What if Oberon called thee a hateful fool, if Puck said that thou wert the greatest blockhead of the set, if the unhistoric court of Theseus voted thee an ass's head! Thy ass's head carries thee through life victoriously; it is a device to make all well. Despite thy self-laudatory exclusiveness, we shall help Cavalery Cobweb to watch thy head, thou art such a tender ass!

The Immortals. — To some, the hard-handed Elizabethan mechanics in a comic antistrophe, and the fairies of northern European mythology, are not
incongruous materials, but rich varieties of thought, wealthy contrasts. No one fails to notice the counterparts: the delicacy, the dream; the coarseness, the reality; the refined sentiment of Titania, the ridiculous ambition of Bottom.

Shakespeare's fairies live in a community ruled by a king and queen whose court is in the farthest steppe of India. The king has a jester; the queen has attendants. The subjects are called elves. The fairies are very small; they take shelter in acorn cups, the slough of a snake makes Titania a robe, the wings of bats make fairy coats, butterflies' wings are fairy fans, and a honey-bag would overflow Cobweb. Their movements are very rapid—even Puck can put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes.

The fairies are a part of nature. They eat fruit, deck the cowslips with dewdrops, war with noxious insects and reptiles, know the magical properties of herbs, fetch jewels from the deep, rock the earth, overcast the sky, and even incense the winds and moon and cause tempests. They dance in orbs, ringlets, roundels; and they sing hymns and carols. They revel at night, midnight being their magic hour, but need not vanish at cockcrow—yet, they are shadows! They are a beneficent, invisible population of the air and the earth. They love and hate mortals; they leave changelings; they bless the bridal bed. Yet, no Athenian believes in them!

Oberon, literally Elf-King, is a native of Germany. He appeared later as Alberon and Auberon in France. In England, Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene*, introduced Auberon as Oberon; but Spenser's Oberon is mortal.

Titania is a name given to Diana. Chaucer calls Titania Proserpine. Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*,
It is noticeable that magic forces Titania to do what love and duty could not.

Puck was primarily a generic name in the northern European countries, and meant elf, sprite. Puck became a specific name of a sprite that is well known in English literature as Robin Goodfellow, Hobgoblin, Robert Goblin. He was distinctly a village elf, the author of many mischievous pranks in everyday life, the friend and menial helpmate of those who fed and pleased him. What a jester and body-servant he is to Oberon!

Oberon, Titania, and Puck are not names of Shakespeare's creation; but Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed are his own choice — and what an improvement on such fairy names as Hop, Pip, Tib, Tit!

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

Duration of the Action. — Daniel's time-analysis is as follows: —

Day 1. Act I.

Day 2. Acts II, III, and part of sc. i. Act IV.

Day 3. Part of sc. i. Act IV., sc. ii. Act IV., and Act V.

Theseus was married on May-day; therefore, the four days to which he refers are April 28th, the 29th, the 30th, and May 1st. Hippolyta's four nights are April 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th.

It is difficult to count those days and nights throughout the play. Many critics conclude that the time is
a hopeless muddle, as time is wont to be in a dream. One critic suggests that the lovers sleep twenty-four consecutive hours in the palace wood. The lovers are awakened on May-morning. What if they did not leave Athens as they expected to on the evening of the 28th? They were happy in Athens till May 1st; and, apparently, Egeus had not missed his daughter. One critic asks, Why begin the action four days before Theseus' marriage? Another replies that, if Theseus had not allowed Hermia three days to come to a decision, he would have been needlessly harsh in his own joyous marriage mood.

Study: —

I. i. 83, 164, 178, 209, 223, 247.
I. ii. 98.
II. i. 60, 138, 139, 222, 267.
II. ii. 38.
III. ii. 60, 61, 379, 380, 395, 419, 427, 433, 446.
IV. i. 68, 88, 94, 102, 105, 131-133, 182.
IV. ii. 34.
V. i. 33, 34, 39, 361, 399, 420.
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THESEUS, duke of Athens.
EGEUS, father to Hermia.
LYSANDER, betrothed to Hermia.
DEMETRIUS, once suitor to Helena, now in love with Hermia.
PHILOSTRATE, master of the revels to Theseus.

HIPPOLYTA, queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.
HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, betrothed to Lysander.
HELENA, in love with Demetrius.

QUINCE, a carpenter,
BOTTOM, a weaver,
FLUTE, a bellows-mender,
SNOT, a tinker,
SNUG, a joiner,

STARVELING, a tailor,
Performing in the interlude the parts of PROLOGUE, PYRAMUS, THISBE, WALL, LION, MOONSHINE.

Other fairies attending their king and queen.

Scene: Athens, and a wood near it.
A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

ACT I

SCENE I. Athens. The palace of Theseus

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, and Attendants

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
draws on apace; four nappy days bring in
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hipp. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow

1 Nuptial. Pronounce nūp'shōl. Pertaining to the ceremony of marriage.
2 Apace. At a quick pace; hence, speedily.
3 Lingers. A transitive verb meaning makes long, makes move slowly forward.
4 Step-dame. Stepmother.
5 Dowager. A widow whose dower is paid out of the heir's estate.
6 Long withering out. Steadily making less through living a long time.
7 Steep themselves in. Be overwhelmed by.
8 Quickly ... time. Pass rapidly in dreams.
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

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

[Exit Philostrate.

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

Enter Egeus, Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke!
The. Thanks, good Egeus: what’s the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.

1 New-bent. Variant readings are new’bent and now bent. If the old moon would last four nights more, the night to which Hippolyta ref would be moonless. Moon means literally time measurer. According to the Greek reckoning of time, the first day of the month and the new moon were coincident.

3 Solemnities. Formal celebration of the nuptials.


5 Companion. A contemptuous term in Elizabethan English. We use fellow. Fellow and companion have exchanged meanings. Cf. Fellow in a university, and lady’s companion.

6 Pomp. Spectacular procession.

7 Triumph. Mask. An entertainment wherein the actors wore masks. Such a diversion was common at weddings.

What’s... thee? What has happened to thee?
Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious Duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchang'd love-tokens with my child:

Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawd conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats,—messengers

Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth:
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious Duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace

Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law

Immediately provided in that case.

1 Feigning. The falsetto voice of deceptive Lysander may be the meaning of Egeus' words. A variant reading is faining, which was the spelling of feigning. There was a homonym, which was spelled faining, and which meant lovingly yearning.
2 Stolen fantasy. Secretly stamped his image on her love-fancy, her imagination.
3 Gauds. Trifling ornaments that caused joy. Gauds and jewels are doublets.
4 Conceits. Fanciful devices.
5 Knacks. Knick-knacks.
6 Be it so. If it be so that.
7 Immediately case. Legal phraseology, meaning expressly provided to meet such a case as this. By one of Solon's laws, Athenians had an absolute power of life and death over their children; therefore, it is possible that the law is ancient.
The. What say you, Hermia? be advis'd, fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god;
One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
50 By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.
The. In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
55 The other must be held the worthier.
Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.
The. Rather your eyes must with his judgement look.

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

65 The. Either to die the death or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Know of your youth, examine well your blood, Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice, You can endure the livery of a nun, For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd, To live a barren sister all your life, Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon. Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood, To undergo such maiden pilgrimage; But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd, Than that which withering on the virgin thorn Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness. Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord, Ere I will yield my virgin patent up

Know of. Ascertain from.
Blood. Passions as opposed to reason.
Whether. Pronounce wher, a monosyllable.
Livery. Formerly, any distinctive dress; now, the dress of servants.
Nun. North's Plutarch has the expression a nun of the temple to signify a priestess, a votaress, to Diana, the goddess of chaste maidenhood.
Mew'd. Shut up. A mew was a coop in which falcons were put to mew, or moult, their feathers.
Faint. Not lacking in fervour, but in volume of sound: the voices are those of women free from earthly passions, and full of heavenly aspirations.
Earthlier happy. In the worldly sense as distinguished from the monastic, the married woman is happier than the unmarried. Nothing pleased Elizabeth, the virgin queen, more than to hear praises of the single life.
Distill'd. Having the perfume extracted. Cf. Shakespeare's fifth sonnet:
“But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.”
Virgin patent. Patent to be a virgin; i.e., the privileges to which, as an unmarried woman, she is entitled. A patent.
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke  
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.  

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

Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield  
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

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

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

Lys. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,  
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;

is a letter bearing the royal seal and conferring certain privileges.

1 Lordship. Authority, dominion.  
2 Whose. To whose.  
3 Sealing-day. Legal phraseology for marriage day.  
4 As he would. As Egeus would have you do.  
5 Austerity. Self-mortification.  
6 Crazed. Having a flaw, cracked; such as only an insane person would claim.  
7 Render. Bestow upon.  
8 Estate unto. Estate upon; i.e., make over as an estate upon.  
9 Deriv'd. Descended from as good ancestors.  
10 Possess'd. Off.
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius;
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia:

Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry;

Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come;

And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both.
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will;
Or else the law of Athens yield you up—

Which by no means we may extenuate—
To death, or to a vow of single life.
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business

---

1 If not with vantage. If not superior to his.
2 To his head. Before his face; i.e., openly and unreservedly.
3 In idolatry. Even to idolatry.
4 Spotted. Antonym of spotless; therefore, very wicked, far from innocent.
5 Schooling. Pupil-like instructions.
6 For. As regards.
7 Extenuate. Diminish in force.
8 What cheer? How do you feel? How is it with you?
9 Go along. Come along.
Against our nuptial and confer with you
Of something nearly that concern yourselves.

_Ege._ With duty and desire we follow you.

[Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.

_Lys._ How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?

_Her._ Belike for want of rain, which I could well

Betem them from the tempest of my eyes.

_Lys._ Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,

Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;

But, either it was different in blood,—

_Her._ O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

_Lys._ Or else misgrafted in respect of years,—

_Her._ O spite! too old to be engag'd to young.

_Lys._ Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,—

_Her._ O hell! to choose love by another's eyes.

_Lys._ Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,

War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,

Making it momentary as a sound,

---

1 Against. In provision for.

2 Nearly that concerns. That very closely concerns.

3 How chance. How does it chance, or happen, that.

4 Belike. Probably.

5 Betem. Pour upon.

6 Ay me! An exclamation of pain.

7 For aught. From all.

8 Blood. Rank.

9 O cross! too low. Oh, what a misfortune it is that a marriage is forbidden because one of the lovers is in rank too high to be subjected to the other, who is of humble birth.

10 Misgrafted in respect of. Ill-grafted in consideration of.

11 Stood upon. Depended upon.
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
145 Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.
150 Her. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
155 Wishes and tears, poor fancy’s followers.
Lys. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me,
Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,

---

1 Revenue. Pronounce ré-vén'ue.
2 Respects. Looks upon.
3 Forth. Forth from.
4 League. A league was variously estimated. In the next scene, the wood is called the Palace Wood, and is there said to be a mile without the town. Without means outside.
5 Observance. Romulus, the founder of Rome, instituted festivities in honour of Flora, the goddess of flowers. Those festivities lasted from April 28th to May 3d. The ancient Britons and the early English chose May-day to welcome the advent of the flowers. The ceremonies of bringing in the May in the early morning, of crowning the May queen, and of dancing around the May pole have not yet died out. All lovers of nature hail May-day.
6 Best arrow ... head. Some of Cupid's arrows were tipped with gold, and inspired love; others were tipped with lead, and repelled love.
7 Simplicity. Innocence.
8 Doves. The chariot of Venus, goddess of Love and Beauty, was drawn by doves.
By that which knitteth souls and prospers ¹ loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,²
When the false Troyan under sail was seen,

By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever woman spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.


Enter Helena

Her. God speed fair Helena! whither away?³
Hel. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves you fair⁴: O happy fair⁵!
Your eyes are lode-stars⁶; and your tongue’s sweet air
More tuneable⁷ than lark to shepherd’s ear,

When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.

¹ Prospers. Makes prosperous. Probably a reference to Venus’ girdle, which created or restored love.
² Carthage queen. An anachronism. Dido and Æneas lived many years after Theseus; but Shakespeare’s Hermia belongs to the sixteenth century, and was a contemporary of Bottom the Weaver. After his flight from Troy, Æneas visited Carthage, where Queen Dido received and entertained him. She fell in love with her guest, who promised to marry her; but he changed his mind. When Dido saw his ships sailing away, she burnt herself to death on a funeral pyre.
³ Whither away? Where are you going?
⁴ You fair. You who are fair.
⁵ Fair. Fair one.
⁶ Lode-stars. Leading, or guiding, stars; hence, pole-stars, a not unfrequent compliment.
⁷ Tuneable. Tuneful.
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue’s sweet melo.

Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I’d give to be to you translated.
O teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius’ heart.

Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.
Hel. O that my prayers could such affection move!
Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.
Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.
Hel. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!
Her. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem’d Athens as a paradise to me:
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn’d a heaven into a hell!

---

1 Catching. Very contagious.
2 Favour. Good graces.
3 Catch. Get possession of by contracting the disease. If her ear knew the voice, her tongue could imitate it.
4 Bated. Excepted.
5 Translated. Transformed.
6 O, then, .. hell! What power must there be in Lysander’s
Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:
To-morrow night, when Phæbe ¹ doth behold
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
A time that lovers' flights doth still ² conceal,
Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

Her. And in the wood, where often you and I
215 Upon faint ³ primrose-beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.⁴
220 Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my Hermia.                [Exit Hermia.

Helena, adieu:

225 As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!     [Exit.

Hel. How happy some o'er other some ⁵ can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he ⁶ do know:
230 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,

charms to cause a paradise to become a hell. Cf. Milton's
well-known lines: —

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."
¹ Phæbe. Diana as goddess of the moon.
² Still. Always.
³ Faint. Suggests a delicate fragrance and a pale colour —
a welcome couch for those who faint from weariness.
⁴ Stranger companies. Companies of strangers.
⁵ Other some. Literally, a second some; i.e., another body
of people.
⁶ But he. But him.
So I, admiring 1 of his qualities:
Things base and vile, holding no quantity;2
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste3:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he often is beguil'd.

As waggish boys in game 4 themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjur'd every where:
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,4
He hail'd 6 down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So 7 he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell 8 him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense 9:

But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.10

[Exit.

1 Admiring. In the admiration.
2 Holding no quantity. Out of all proportion to what they are estimated by love.
3 Figure unheedy haste. Typify unreasoning haste.
4 Game. Sport.
6 Hail'd. Poured as thick as hail.
7 So. Then.
8 Go tell. Go and tell.
9 Dear expense. Bitter bargain. Perhaps, an expense that I should gladly incur. Demetrius and Hermia will meet.
10 But herein . . . again. Helena's recompense will be the sight of Demetrius thither and back.
Scene II. Athens. Quince’s house

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

Quin. Is all our company here?
Bot. You were best¹ to call them generally,² man by man, according to the scrip.³
Quin. Here is the scroll of every man’s name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude⁴ before the Duke and the Duchess, on his wedding-day at night.
Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on,⁵ then read the names of the actors, and so grow on to a point.⁶
Quin. Marry,⁷ our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.
Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.⁸

¹ You were best. It would be best for you.
² Generally. A Bottomese blunder for individually.
³ Scrip. Scrip of paper on which were written the dramatis personae. It is afterwards called a scroll.
⁴ Interlude. Short entertainment given in the intervals of a festival or between the acts of a drama.
⁵ On. Of.
⁶ Grow on to a point. Come to the point. Grow points to Quince’s name. Elizabethan audiences smiled at the thought of the growth of a point. A weaver was accustomed to draw to a conclusion.
⁷ Marry. A corruption of Mary, a mode of swearing by the Virgin Mary.
⁸ Spread yourselves. Do not stand all together.
Quin. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills hims "most gallantly for love.

Bot. That will ask 1 some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole 2 in some measure. 3 To the rest. 4 Yet my chief humour 5 is for a tyrant: I could play Hercles 6 rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, 7 to make all split. 8


"The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus' 9 car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar 10
The foolish Fates."

1 Ask. Require.
2 Condole. Another Bottomese pedantry for mourn.
3 In some measure. Considerably.
4 To the rest. Name the rest of the players.
5 Humour. Fancy.
6 Hercles. Hercules, a demigod whose life was a series of thrilling adventures. He was generally represented as a blusterer whose ranting would delight Bottom.
7 To tear a cat in. Perhaps a burlesque upon Hercules' killing of a lion; therefore, of violent action.
8 To make all split. A nautical phrase referring to the splitting of masts during a hurricane; therefore, blustering.
9 Phibbus. Phoebus, the sun-god.
10 And make and mar. Make fortunate and ruin.
This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players.
This is Ercles’ vein, a tyrant’s vein; a lover is more
condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.
Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Flute, you must take Thisby on you.¹

Flu. What is Thisby? a wand’ring knight?²
Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.
Flu. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have
a beard coming.

Quin. That’s all one:³ you shall play it in a
mask,⁴ and you may speak as small ⁵ as you will.

Bot. An⁶ I may hide my face, let me play Thisby
too, I’ll speak in a monstrous little voice, Listen,
listen⁷! “Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby
dear, and lady dear!”

Quin. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and,
Flute, you Thisby.

Bot. Well, proceed.
Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quince.
Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby’s
mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

¹ Take Thisby on you. Undertake the rôle of Thisbe.
² Wand’ring knight. Knight-errant.
³ That’s all one. That does not matter.
⁴ Play it in a mask. The actor’s beard was concealed by a
mask.
⁵ Small. Softly.
⁶ An. If.
⁷ Listen. A variant reading is Thisne, which is preceded
by the quotation marks. Thisne is, perhaps, an unintentional
blunder for Thisbe; perhaps an intentional pronounciation of
Thisbe in a monstrous little voice. There was an old word
thisne, which meant in this way.
Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's
65 father. Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part; and,
I hope, here is a play fitted.¹

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you,
if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.²

Quin. You may do it extempore,³ for it is nothing
70 but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I
will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar,
that I will make the Duke say: "Let him roar again,
let him roar again."

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

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright
80 the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more
discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate ⁴ my
voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking
dove ⁵; I will roar an 't were any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus; for
85 Pyramus is a sweet-fac'd man; a proper ⁶ man, as one
shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-
like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

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

Quin. Why, what you will.

¹ Fitted. In which each actor is especially suitable for the
part assigned to him.
² Study. A theatrical term for committing to memory.
³ Extempore. On the spur of the moment.
⁴ Aggravate. Literally, make greater; Bottom means the
opposite.
⁵ Dove. He meant lamb.
⁶ Proper. Handsome.
Bot. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quin. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefac’d. But, masters, here are your parts; and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by tomorrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg’d with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.

Quin. At the Duke’s oak we meet.

Bot. Enough; hold or cut bow-strings. [Exeunt.

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1 Discharge. Perform.
2 Purple-in-grain. The cochineal insect from which scarlet dye was originally obtained was called granum, grain.
3 French-crown-colour beard. The French gold crown piece was light yellow. Bald heads were nicknamed French crowns. Baldness resulted from an illness more prevalent in France than elsewhere.
4 Con. Learn thoroughly.
5 By moonlight. After the work of the day was done.
6 Devices. Plans.
7 Draw … properties. Write out a list of stage requisites.
8 Obscenely. Bottom meant, perhaps, more seemly; perhaps, darkly, obscurely, unseen.
9 Hold or cut bow-strings. Probably borrowed from archery: if an archer did not keep his appointment, his bow-strings would be cut by the other members of the party; hence, keep your appointment, or give up the affair in hand.
ACT II

SCENE I. A wood near Athens

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy and Puck.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fai. Over hill, over dale,
    Thorough "bush, thorough brier,
    Over park, over pale,
    Thorough flood, thorough fire,
    I do wander every where,
    Swifter than the moones' sphere;
    And I serve the fairy queen,
    To dew her orbs upon the green.

The cowslips' tall her pensioners' be:

1 Thorough. A metrical spelling of the Early English "th" through, to indicate the burr-like pronunciation of r in

2 Moones. Pronounce moon's. The apostrophe to indicate the possessive case was rare in Shakespearian English. Moon's preserves the rhythm, but a pause after moon's would be equally effective. A variant reading is moony.

3 Sphere. Orbit. A reference to the Ptolemaic system, according to which all the planets and stars were supposed to be fixed in hollow, crystalline spheres, or globes; the globes made an entire revolution of the earth in twenty-four hours.

4 Dew. Bedew, water.

5 Orbs. Fairy-rings, marks that show where fairies danced; their rich verdure is a reward of the care with which the fairies water the chosen circles.

6 Cowslips. Favourite fairy flowers, yellow with deeper yellow spots within the bell.

7 Pensioners. Paid-men. Elizabeth's fashionable bands of
In their gold coats spots you see;  
Those be rubies, fairy favours;¹  
In those freckles live their savours:  

15 And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.  
Farewell, thou lob² of spirits; I’ll be gone:  
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.⁴  

Puck. The King doth keep his revels here to-night;  
Take heed the Queen come not within his sight;  
For Oberon is passing⁵ fell⁶ and wrath,⁷  
Because that she as her attendant hath  
A lovely boy, stol’n from an Indian king;  
She never had so sweet a changeling⁸;  
And jealous Oberon would have the child  
25 Knight of his train, to trace⁹ the forests wild;  
But she perforce¹⁰ withholds the loved boy,  
Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy:  
And now they¹¹ never meet in grove or green,

military courtiers were called pensioners. They were tall, handsome, rich, of the best families and fortune, and wore costumes garnished with gold lace.

¹ Favours. Gracious gifts.
² Dewdrops. The pearls of the fields.
³ Lob. Loutish lubber. Cf. Ariel in The Tempest. Any fairy that could not take refuge in an acorn-cup would be a lubber to Titania’s band.
⁴ Anon. Instant one; i.e., immediately.
⁵ Passing. Surpassingly, exceedingly.
⁶ Fell. Very angry.
⁷ Wrath. The noun form for the adjective form, wroth.
⁸ Changeling. Pronounce chan’ge-ling. The degenerate child left by fairies in the place of the promising child that they stole; here, the stolen child.
⁹ Trace. Track as a hunter.
¹⁰ Perforce. Through force.
¹¹ They. Titania and Oberon.
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,¹
30 But they do square,² that ³ all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn-cups and hide them⁴ there.

_Fai._ Either I mistake your shape and making⁵ quite,
Or else you are that shrewd⁶ and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he

35 That frights the maidens of the villagery⁷;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in⁸ the quern⁹
And bootless¹⁰ make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink¹¹ to bear no barm¹²;
Mislead¹³ night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?

40 Those that Hobgoblin¹⁴ call you and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?

_Puck._ Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.

---

¹ _Sheen._ Either a noun, shine, brightness, starlight, modifying sheen; or an adjective, shining, very bright, modifying starlight.
² _Square._ Quarrel noisily. Variant readings are _jar, squall, spar_.
³ _That._ So that.
⁴ _Them._ Themselves.
⁵ _Making._ Make-up, composition.
⁶ _Shrewd._ Extremely malicious.
⁷ _Villagery._ Villagers, or peasants, collectively.
⁸ _In._ With.
⁹ _Quern._ A churn-like hand-mill for grinding corn. Puck, being mischievous, skims the milk when it should not be skimmed, and grinds the corn when it is not wanted.
¹⁰ _Bootless._ Without compensating profit.
¹¹ _Drink._ Ale.
¹² _Barm._ Yeast, head, foam.
¹³ _Mislead._ As the _ignis-fatuus_, or Will o’ the Wisp.
¹⁴ _Hobgoblin._ Robin Goblin.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her and down topples she,
And "tailor" cries, and falls into a cough;

1 Filly foal. Young mare. A variant reading is silly foal.
2 Gossip's bowl. Christening-cup. Gossip is a corruption of God and sib, relationship, and meant a sponsor in baptism. In the cup was a beverage called lamb's-wool, compounded of ale, nutmeg, sugar, toast, and roasted, small, sour, wild apples. The idle talk attending the festivities that followed the christening lives in the modern word gossip.
3 Very. Truly exact.
4 Dewlap. The loose skin which hangs from the neck of cattle, and which laps the dew when the cattle are grazing; i.e., a double chin.
5 Wisest aunt. Any sapient, good-natured old woman.
   "In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
   With good old folks, and let them tell the tales
   Of woeful ages long ago betid."
and Winter's Tale: —
   "A sad tale's best for winter: I have one
   Of spirits and goblins."
7 Three-foot. Three-legged.
8 Tailor. Dr. Johnson says: "The custom of crying 'tailor' at a sudden fall backwards, I think I remember to have observed. He that slips beside his chair, falls as a tailor squats upon his board." Tailor and thief were Elizabethan synonyms. See Macbeth, II. 3. Tailor in Germany is still a reproachful epithet for one who has done a mischievous trick;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

Enter, from one side, Oberon, with his train; from the other, Titania, with hers

Obe. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.
Tita. What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsworn his bed and company.
Obe. Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?
Tita. Then I must be thy lady: but I know

When thou hast stol’n away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steppe of India?

But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,

probably because a tailor is necessary to repair the damage done to the clothes. Variant readings are tail her, traitor, and tailor, opposite of header.

1 Quire. Party in concert.
2 Waxed. Grow merrier. A variant reading is yexen, obsolete for laugh one’s self into a hiccupping.
3 Neeze. Obsolete for sneeze.
4 Wasted. Whiled away.
5 Room. Make room.
6 Corin. Poetical name for a shepherd.
7 Pipes of corn. Oaten straws.
8 Phillida. The accusative of Phyllis, a poetical name for a shepherdess.
9 Steppe. Precipitous place.
10 Forsooth. Certainly, used contemptuously.
11 Bouncing Amazon. Hippolyta. Bouncing applied to a woman was the counterpart of swaggering applied to a man.
Your buskin'd \(^1\) mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must \(^2\) be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Obe. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

Glance at \(^3\) my credit \(^4\) with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna,\(^5\) whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Ægle \(^6\) break his faith,

With Ariadne \(^7\) and Antiopa \(^8\)?

Tita. These are the forgeries \(^9\) of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,\(^10\)
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved \(^11\) fountain or by rushy brook,

Or in \(^12\) the beached \(^13\) margent \(^14\) of the sea,

---

\(^1\) Buskin'd. Wearing a buskin, or half boot, with a high heel. It was worn by hunters and actors.

\(^2\) Must. Is on the point of being. Definite futurity. Cf. Merchant of Venice:

"Then must the Jew be merciful."

\(^3\) Glance at. Indirectly attack.

\(^4\) Credit. Power depending on reputation.

\(^5\) Perigouna. Daughter of Sinnis, whom Theseus slew.

\(^6\) Ægle. A nymph, daughter of Panopeus.

\(^7\) Ariadne. Daughter of Minos, King of Crete. To her, Theseus owed his victory over the Minotaur. Some say that Ariadne hanged herself when Theseus deserted her.

\(^8\) Antiopa. Either the sister or the mother of Hippolyta. Antiopa was a present from Hercules.

\(^9\) Forgeries. Creations of the imagination.

\(^10\) Middle summer's spring. The spring, that is, the beginning, of midsummer.

\(^11\) Paved. With a pebbly bottom, opposed to one which is slimy.

\(^12\) In. Within or on.

\(^13\) Beached. Formed by a beach, or which serves as a beach.

\(^14\) Margent. Obsolete for margin."
To dance our ringlets \(^1\) to the whistling wind,\(^2\)  
But with thy brawls \(^3\) thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,\(^4\)  
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
Contagious \(^5\) fogs; which falling in the land  
Have every petty \(^6\) river made so proud  
That they \(^7\) have overborne their continents \(^8\):  
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,\(^9\)  
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn \(^10\)  
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard \(^11\);  
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;  
The nine men's morris \(^12\) is fill'd up with mud,

---

\(^1\) Ringlets. Little circles.  
\(^2\) To the whistling wind. To the music of the whistling wind.  
\(^3\) Brawls. One meaning is a French dance of a boisterous character; another, a quarrel caused by a bragging bully.  
\(^4\) Piping to us in vain. Playing for us to dance, and we did not dance because you prevented us.  
\(^5\) Contagious. Full of unwelcome diseases.  
\(^6\) Petty. A variant reading is pelting, contemptibly small.  
\(^7\) They. The rivers.  
\(^8\) Continents. Banks that hold them in.  
\(^9\) Stretched . . . vain. Worn the yoke on his neck, which he stretched nobly forth in arduous endeavour.  
\(^10\) Corn. Wheat.  
\(^11\) Beard. Prickles.  
\(^12\) Nine men's morris. An outdoor game of checkers. A board of any size was cut out in the grass, and consisted of three concentric squares. There was a hole in the common centre, there was a hole in the corner of each square, and there was a hole in the middle of each side: there were twenty-five holes in all. Each of the two players had nine counters, or merrils, and placed them alternately in the holes. The aim was to prevent the other from getting three in a line. The forfeiture was the loss of a counter. Morris is a corruption of merrils,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change

probably because the merrils performed a kind of Morris dance in the course of a game. The game is played on paper by Noughts and Crosses. The writer has played it on the grass and on paper under the name of Fox and Goose.

1 Quaint mazes. Rare and dainty intricate steps on the luxuriant grass. Running the figure of eight was the most common; the player had to reach different parts of the figure eight under specified penalties. Some of the figures resembled mazes or labyrinths, and would-be Longboats prevented the windings from becoming grass-grown.

2 Human mortals. Men. There were fairy mortals; i.e., fairies subject to death.

3 Here. Round about us, there are no winter festivities.

4 Therefore. Because of our quarrels.

5 Pale. Because of the fogs. Rain often follows a watery or hazy moon.

6 Rheumatic. Pronounce rheumático.

7 Distemperature. Quarrel between Titania and Oberon; or the anger of the moon.

8 Hiems'. Winter's.

9 Chiding. Biting bitterly. Variant readings are chilling, and childing, meaning productive, teeming.
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissenison;
We are their parents and original.
Obe. Do you amend it then; it lies in you:
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

Tita.  Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot’ress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip’d by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood,
When we have laugh’d to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
Following her womb then rich with my young squire,—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

1 Mazed. Greatly bewildered.
2 By their increase. Judging each season by its produce.
3 Progeny. Family.
4 Dissonion. Pronounce dis-sen’si-on.
5 Origin. Origin.
6 Henchman. Page of honour.
7 *The fairy ... me. I would not sell the child for all of your fairy kingdom.
8 Vot’ress. Votaress, a woman that has taken a solemn vow.
9 *Full. Very.
10 *Traders. Merchantmen.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

Obe. How long within this wood intend you stay?

Titania. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Obe. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

Titania. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!

We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[Exit Titania with her train.

Obe. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb'rest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music?

---

1 Perchance. Perhaps.
2 Round. Country dance.
3 I will spare your haunts. I will avoid the places that you frequent.
4 Chide. Quarrel.
5 Injury. Insult.
6 Since. When.
7 Mermaid. Mermaid and siren were synonymous. A fabulous sea animal having the upper part of a woman and the lower part of a fish. The siren sang enchantingly.
8 Dolphin. A whale-like creature ten feet long. It was very fond of music.
9 Certain. Either several or fixed.
10 Spheres. See II. i. 7.
11 To hear. On hearing.
12 Sea-maid. Mermaid, siren.
Puck.  
I remember.

155  Obe. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took  
At a fair vestal throned by the west,  
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;  
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,  
And the imperial votaress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.

165 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:  
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid  
Will make or man or woman madly dote

---

1 But thou couldst not. Puck was an inferior spirit.
2 Cold. Physically cold: the rays do not burn as do the rays of the sun. And spiritually cold: the moon is the patroness of chastity.
3 All arm'd. Having all of his usual weapons, the bow and quiver.
4 Certain. Deliberately directed.
5 By the west. In England, which is west of Athens.
6 As. As if.
7 Might. Was able to.
8 Watery. A reference, perhaps, to the tides; perhaps to the belief that the moon drew up moisture from the earth. Rain often follows a watery or hazy moon.
9 Votaress. This is accepted as a compliment to Elizabeth, who vowed that she would be a virgin queen.
10 Fancy-free. Immune from the power of love.
11 Bolt. Arrow.
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

175 Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. [Exit.

Obe. Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon,

180 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love:
And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
As I can take it with another herb,

185 I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter Demetrius, Helena following him

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood;
And here am I, and wode within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

1 It. Man or woman.
2 Leviathan. Shakespeare meant whale.
3 I'll... earth. A colloquial expression that meant, I'll make a trip round the world. Perhaps the zodiac suggested girdle.
4 Forty. An indefinite number in Elizabethan English.
5 Soul of. The most intense.
6 Another herb. Diana's rose. See IV. i. 73.
7 The one... me. One is Lysander. Hermia is killing Demetrius by not returning his love.
8 Wode. Mad.
Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Dem. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?

Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:

Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,—
And yet a place of high respect with me,—

Than to be used as you use your dog?

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

Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Dem. You do impeach your modesty too much,

To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

1 Adamant. Adamant and lodestone were synonymous. Helena's heart is as true as steel, but is not hard.

2 Do I speak you fair? Do I speak kindly to you?

3 Spaniel. A very fawning dog.

4 Lose. Blot out of memory.

5 Worser. A double comparative.

6 Of high respect. Highly respected.

7 Impeach. Expose to reproach.
Hel. Your virtue is my privilege: for that
   It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world:

Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?

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

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.

Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd:
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

Dem. I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
   You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!

Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex:

---

1 Privilege. Protection.
2 For that. Because.
3 In my respect. As far as I am concerned.
4 Brakes. Bracken, thickets.
5 Apollo. The sun-god. He pursued Daphne, who was
   metamorphosed into a laurel-bush to escape him.
6 Griffin. A fabled creature with the head, wings, and fore-
   legs of an eagle, and the rest of the body like a lion.
7 Hind. Female deer.
8 Bootless. Unavailing.
9 Questions. Talk, discourse.
10 Do not believe but. Be assured.
11 Your wrongs . . . sex. Helena means that it is disgraceful
We cannot fight for love, as men may do; We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.  

[Exit Demetrius.]

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

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

Re-enter Puck

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.  

Puck. Ay, there it is.  

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.  

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  

250 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:  

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night, Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;  

255 And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin, Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:

of a woman to run after a man as she is doing, but Demetrius forces her because he will not woo her.

1 To die. In dying.  

2 Upon. By.  

3 Fly him. Flee from him.  

4 Oxlips. A hybrid between the primrose and cowslip.  

5 Luscious woodbine. Sweet-scented honeysuckle.  

6 Sometime of the night. Sometimes at night, or during part of the night.  

7 Dances and delight. Delightful dances.  

8 Throws. Casts.  

9 Enamell'd. Highly polished.  

10 Weed. Dress.
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:

A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.

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

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

[Exeunt.

Scene II. Another part of the wood

Enter Titania, with her train

Tit. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,

1 Streak. Stroke gently.
2 Fantasies. Fancies.
3 When. At a time when.
4 Shalt. Cannot help but.
5 Look. Take care.
6 Shall. Is bound to.
7 Roundel. Dance and song in a ring.
8 For. Before or in.
9 Cankers. Canker worms, which prey upon buds.
10 Rere-mice. Rere means stir. Flitter-mice, or bats. The body without the wings resembles that of a mouse.
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
Then to your offices and let me rest.

The Fairies sing.

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

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

Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Cho. Philomel, with melody, etc.

1 Quaint. Delicately ingenious.
2 Asleep. To sleep.
3 Offices. Duties.
4 Double. Forked.
5 Thorny. Prickly.
6 Newts. Water lizards. A newt is properly an eft: the n passed over to eft.
7 Bliz worms. Slow-worms. They are dim-sighted and deaf.
8 Philomel. Philomela, an Athenian princess, was metamorphosed into a nightingale when she was trying to escape her cruel brother-in-law, who became a hawk. It is the male nightingale that sings.
9 Spinners. Spiders.
25 A Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:
   One aloof stand sentinel.

[Exeunt Fairies. TITANIA sleeps.

Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on TITANIA’s eyelids

Obe. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
   Do it for thy true-love take,
   Love and languish for his sake:

   ‘Be it ounce,’ or cat, or bear,
   Pard or boar with bristled hair,
   In thy eye that shall appear
   When thou wak’st, it is thy dear:
   Wake when some vile thing is near.

[Exit.

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA

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

Her. Be it so, Lysander; find you out a bed;

40 For I upon this bank will rest my head.

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

Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
   Lie further, yet; do not lie so near.

45 Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!

---

1 Ounce. A small leopard, a lynx, a mountain panther.

2 Cat. Wildcat.

3 Pard. Leopard.


5 Tarry . . . day. Wait for the comfort that daylight will bring us.
Love takes the meaning in love's conference. I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit So that but one heart you can make of it; Two bosoms interchained with an oath; Then by your side no bed-room me deny; For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.  

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

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

_Her._ With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!  

[They sleep.]

_Enter Puck_

_Puck._ Through the forest have I gone,  
But Athenian found I none,  
On whose eyes I might approve  

---

1 _Conference._ Conversation. When lovers converse, love helps them to understand each other.  
2 _Beshrew._ A mild oath. Bad luck be to.  
3 _Thy love . . . end!_ May thy love never alter.  
4 _With . . . press'd!_ Hermia does not wish all, but half, of the rest: Lysander may have the other half.  
5 _Approve._ Prove.
This flower's force in stirring love.

Night and silence, — Who is here?
Weeds¹ of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
Churl,² upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.³
When thou wak'st, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid: ⁴
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon. [Exit.

Enter Demetrius and Helena, running

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

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

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling⁵ leave me? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go. [Exit.

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond ⁶ chase!
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.⁷

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;

¹ Weeds. Garments.
² Churl. Rude-mannered peasant.
³ Owe. Own.
⁴ Let love . . . eyelid. Let love forbid sleep to take a seat on thy eyelids; i.e., love will prevent the Athenian from sleeping. His means its, and refers to sleep.
⁵ Darkling. In the dark.
⁶ Fond. Foolishly loving.
⁷ The lesser is my grace. The less favour I find.
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
95 For beasts that meet me run away for fear:
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?
100 But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.
   Lys. [Awaking.] And run through fire I will for
thy sweet sake.
   Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
105 That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!
   Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what
though? 4
110 Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.
   Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
115 The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season:

1 As a monster. Helena means that she is the monster.
Beauty tames beasts.
2 Compare. Compare my eyes.
3 Sphery eyne. Star-like eyes; i.e., as bright as stars. Eyne
is an obsolete plural.
4 What though? What then?
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,\(^1\)

120 Reason becomes the marshall to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook \(^3\)
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

_Hel._ Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?

125 Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout \(^5\) my insufficiency?

Good troth,\(^4\) you do me wrong, good sooth you do,

130 In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well: perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.\(^5\)
O, that a lady, of \(^6\) one man refus'd,
Should of another therefore be abus'd ?? [Exit.]

135 _Lys._ She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there:
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave

140 Are hated most of those they did deceive,
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me! \(^8\)

---

1 _Touching . . . skill._ Having reached the highest point of human discernment, my reason rules my will.
3 _O'erlook._ Read over.
5 _Flout._ Mock at.
4 _Good troth._ Truly.
5 _Gentleness._ Polite breeding.
6 _Of._ By.
?? _Abus'd._ Deceived.
8 _Heresies . . . me!_ Heresies are false doctrines. Those
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honour Helen and to be her knight. [Exit.

Her. [Awaking.] Help me, Lysander, help me!
do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
Lysander! what, remov’d? Lysander! lord!
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.

No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:
Either death or you I’ll find immediately. [Exit.

who change in belief are more bitter against the forsaken
doctrine than are those who never held it; and those who adopt
a new creed are more zealous in it than are those who have
always believed it. In like manner, Lysander hates Hermia
intensely, and loves Helena excessively.

1 Address. Prepare.
2 Prey. An if preying.
3 An if. An is obsolete.
4 Of all love! For love’s sake; i.e., by everything that is
dear to you, I beseech you to speak.
ACT III

SCENE I. The wood. TITANIA lying asleep

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

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. Pat, pat ¹; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house ²; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. Wat say'st thou, bully ³ Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby 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, ⁴ a parlous ⁵ fear.

Star. I believe we must have the killing out, when all is done.⁶

¹ Pat. Exactly.

² Tiring-house. Attiring-house, dressing-room, green-room.

³ Bully. An Elizabethan pet name for a rough, good-tempered fellow. It is still a colloquial adjective to indicate approbation; as, a bully joke.

⁴ By'r lakin. By our ladykin, or dear little lady; i.e., the Virgin Mary.

⁵ Parlous. Perilous. A phonetic spelling that indicates the Elizabethan pronunciation.

⁶ When all is done. After all.
Bot. 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 kill'd 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.

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

Bot. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion? Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in — God amend 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.

Bot. 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

1 Not a whit. Not a little bit, not at all.  
2 Seem to say. Say in effect.  
3 More better. Emphatic comparative.  
4 Eight and six. Possibly, a sonnet; possibly, in alternate lines of eight and six syllables — common ballad metre. The prologue is not in the play.  
5 Eight and eight. Each line containing eight syllables — long metre.  
6 Afeard. A provincialism for afraid.  
7 I promise you. I give you my assurance.  
8 Defect. A Bottomism for effect.
40 wish you, — or I would request you, — or I would en-
treat 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.

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard
things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a cham-
ber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by
moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our
play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac;
find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. 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.

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush
of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to dis-
figure, or to present, the person of Moonshine.
Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall
in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says
the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

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

Bot. Some man or other must present Wall: and
let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some

1 It were pity of my life. It would be a sad thing for me; for I
should be risking my life.

2 Lanthorn. Lantern. The sides were made of horn.
man in the moon was supposed to be there as a punish-
gathering sticks on the Sabbath.

3 Disfigure. Quince meant figure, or represent, act.
rough-cast 1 about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quin. 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 2: and so every one according to his cue. 3

Enter Puck behind

Puck. What hempen home-spuns 4 have we swagging here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What, a play toward 5! I'll be an auditor;
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

Bot. "Thisby, the flowers of odious 6 savours sweet," —
Quin. Odours, odours.
Bot. — "odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear." [Exit.

---

1 Rough-cast. Plaster mixed roughly with small stones.
2 Brake. Thicket.
3 Cue. The signal word, or catchword, for the next speaker to begin. It is said that actors wrote on their copies the letter Q as an abbreviation of quando, when; i.e., to tell them when to begin to speak. Others trace the origin to the French word queue, tail — the tail word of the speech.
4 Hempen home-spuns. Fellows dressed in clumsy garments made from hemp spun at home.
5 Toward. In preparation.
6 Of odious. Have odours.
Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here.

Flu. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must under.

Flu. "Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of \[hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,^4

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,

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

Quin. "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must not

Flu. O,—"As true as truest horse that yet would never tire."

Re-enter Puck, and Bottom with an ass's head

Bot. "If I were fair, Thisby,^6 I were only thine."

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted.

Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]

1 Stranger. Because Puck will play a trick on him.

2 Brisky juvenal. Brisk juvenile, or youth.

3 Eke. Also.

4 Jew. Just to make a jingle. Pyramus and Thisbe were Babylonians.

5 Ninus. First king of Babylon. His tomb, a vast building, was at a distance from the city.

6 If I were fair, Thisby. An unconscious Bottomism. Bottom should say, "If I were as true, fair Thisbe."

[^1: Stranger. Because Puck will play a trick on him.][^4: Jew. Just to make a jingle. Pyramus and Thisbe were Babylonians.][^6: If I were fair, Thisby. An unconscious Bottomism. Bottom should say, "If I were as true, fair Thisbe."
Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,¹
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;
110 And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.
[Exit.

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.²

Re-enter Snout

Snout. O Bottom, thou art chang'd! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass-head³ of your own, do you?  
[Exit Snout.

Re-enter Quince

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated.⁴

Bot. 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.

¹ Round. Through a fantastic roundelay, or round about.
² This is . . . afeard. Bottom was evidently used to practical jokes. For afeard, see III. i. 27.
³ Ass-head. A common retort for a dullard. Of course, Bottom did not know that he was transformed.
⁴ Translated. Transformed.
The ousel cock ¹ so black of hue,
   With orange-tawny bill,
The thrrostle ² with his note so true,
   The wren with little quill,³ —

*Tita.* [Awaking.] What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?

*Bot.* [Sings.]

The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
   The plain-song ⁴ cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
   And dares not answer nay; —

for, indeed, who would set his wit to ⁵ so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie,⁶ though he cry "cuckoo" never so ⁷?

*Tita.* I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:

Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note
   So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force ⁸ perforce doth move me
   On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

*Bot.* Methinks, mistress, you should have little

¹ *Ousel cock.* Male blackbird.
² *Throstle.* Thrush.
³ *Quill.* Weak note, or pipe. The wren is a very small bird.
⁴ *Plain-song.* In plain-song, the harmony depends on the will of the singer; in prick-song, the harmony is pricked, or written. It is said that the minor scale has been derived from the cuckoo's song. The cuckoo's song is not monotonous, but simple. The cry of the cuckoo does resemble the sound of the word *cuckold*, the name given to an unfaithful wife; thus, the cuckoo might remind a husband that his wife is unfaithful. Bottom refers to an Elizabethan belief that a wife's unfaithfulness was due to fate.
⁵ *Set his wit to.* Match his wit against.
⁶ *Give a bird the lie.* Charge a bird with falsehood.
⁷ *Never so.* Ever so much.
⁸ *Fair virtue's force.* The power of thy beauty.
reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

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

Tita. 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! Mote! and Mustardseed!

Enter Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed

Peas. Ready.
Cob. And I.

1 Reason and love . . . now-a-days. Cf. the old proverb, "A man cannot love and be wise."
2 Gleek. Jest. Glee and gleek are doublets. Bottom has just been seriously didactic.
3 Still. Always.
4 Deep. Sea.
5 Pressed flowers. Flowers that you will press as you lie on them.
6 Mote. Moth. Moth was pronounced mote.
Mote. And I.
Mus. And I.
All. Where shall we go?

Tit. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxy thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes;

To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peas. Hail, mortal!

Cob. Hail!
Mote. Hail!
Mus. Hail!
Bot. I cry your worship's mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. 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?

**Peas.** Peaseblossom.

185. **Bot.** 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?

**Mus.** Mustardseed.

190 **Bot.** Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house; I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

**Tit.** Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon, methinks looks with a wat'ry eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.

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

[Exeunt.]

---

1 *If I cut . . . you.* Cobwebs are still used as styptics to stop cuts from bleeding.

2 *Squash.* An unripe pea-pod, not our Canadian vegetable called squash.

3 *Patience.* Perhaps Bottom means impatience, hotness; mustard was supposed to excite choler. Mustard was eaten on roast beef; and Mustard, who was able to force tears from Bottom's eyes, was patient in being devoured by cowardly Ox-beef.

4 *I promise you.* I assure you.

5 *Enforced.* Outraged, violated.
Scene II. Another part of the wood

Enter Oberon

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awak'd;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must ¹ dote on in extremity.²

Enter Puck

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit!

What night-rule ³ now about this haunted grove?
³ Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close ⁴ and consecrated ⁵ bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches,⁶ rude mechanicals,⁷
10 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,⁸
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thickskin ⁹ of that barren sort,¹⁰
Who Pyramus presented,¹¹ in their sport

¹ Must. Compelled by the love-juice.
² In extremity. With the utmost ardour, to an extreme degree.
⁴ Close. Private.
⁵ Consecrated. Held sacred by all.
⁶ Crew of patches. Company of tatterdemalions.
⁷ Rude mechanicals. Ill-bred mechanics.
⁸ Stalls. Slight sheds in which merchandise was exposed for sale.
⁹ Thicksin. Country bumpkin, brainless booby.
¹⁰ Barren sort. Dull company.
¹¹ Presented. Represented, acted.
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake:  
When I did him at this advantage take,  
An ass's nowl I fixed on his head:  
Anon his Thisby must be answered,  
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,  
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,  
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;  
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;  
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.  
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,  
Made senseless things to do them wrong;  
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;

1. In. Into.  
5. Russet-pated choughs. Gray-headed jackdaws. Russet is to-day reddish brown, but was in Elizabethan English gray. Jackdaw and chough were synonymous:  
6. In sort. In a company, in flocks.  
7. Sever themselves. Separate.  
8. At his sight. At sight of him.  
9. At our stamp. At the sound of our footfall, at the stamp of Puck's foot; fairies had power to shake the earth. At one stamp is a variant reading that accentuates the power. At our stump has been suggested, and would refer to some special tree.  
10. He. Another.  
11. Their sense . . . strong. The little sense they had, they lost through fear.  
30 Some sleeves, some hats; from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania wak'd and straightway lov'd an ass.

35 Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?
Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side;

40 That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd.

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS

Obe. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.
Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.
Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

45 Her. 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,

1 Some sleeves. Some things catch sleeves.
2 Yielders. Those who yield.
3 Translated. Transformed.
4 Latch'd. Anointed.
5 Of force. Perforce, of necessity.
6 Stand close. Keep quiet.
7 Lay breath so bitter. Apply bitter words to.
8 O'er shoes in blood. Tolerably deep in blood; i.e., having gone so far. Cf. ankle-deep, knee-deep.
9 In. Into.
And kill me too.

50 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 1 earth may be bor'd and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's 2 noontide with the Antipodes. 3
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, 4 so grim.

Dem. So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty:
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus 5 in her glimmering 6 sphere.

Her. What's this to my Lysander? 7 where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

65 Her. 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, 8 tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,

70 And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch 9!

1 Whole. Solid.
2 Brother's. Phoebe and Phoebus were brother and sister.
3 Antipodes. The dwellers on the other side of the earth.
4 Dead. Death-pale.
5 Venus. The planet.
7 What's . . . Lysander? What has this to do with my Lysander?
8 Once tell true. Tell the truth for once.
9 Touch. Valiant stroke.
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?  
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.  

Dem. You spend your passion on a mispris’d mood:  
75 I am not guilty of Lysander’s blood;  
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.  

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

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?  
Her. A privilege never to see me more.  
80 And from thy hated presence part I so:  
See me no more, whether he be dead or no.  

[Exit.  
Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein,  
Here therefore for a while I will remain.  
So sorrow’s heaviness doth heavier grow  
85 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.  

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite  
And laid the love-juice on some true-love’s sight:

1 Doubler. More forked. Adders sting with their teeth, not with their tongues.
2 Mispris’d mood. Mistaken caprice.
3 Therefore. Thereby.
4 So. With this decision.
5 There... vein. There is no use in following her while she is angry.
6 So sorrow’s... stay. Thus, the heaviness of sorrow grows heavier because that bankrupt sleep owes a debt to sorrow; but, of that debt, sleep will pay a little, if I stay here and wait for his offer. Demetrius means that he will try to sleep a little, and sleep will cause forgetfulness of his sorrow.
90 Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding truth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
95 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.

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.

100 When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

---

1 Of thy misprision. From thy mistake.
2 Must perforce ensue. It must ensue.
3 Then fate fail. Then, it is due to fate that, for one man that is true, a million men are false. O'er-rules means ordains; that, in that.
4 Confounding oath on oath. Breaking oath upon oath.
5 Fancy-sick. Love-sick.
6 Of cheer. In countenance.
7 That costs dear. Refers to the Shakespearian belief that every sigh took from the heart a drop of blood.
8 Against. By the time that.
9 Tartar's bow. The Tartars were famous for their skill in archery.
10 Cupid's archery. See II. i. 157-159.
Scene 3] A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

Re-enter Puck

110 Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.¹
Shall we their fond pageant² see?

115 Lord, what fools these mortals be!
Obe. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one;
That must needs be sport alone³;
And those things do best please me
That befal preposterously.⁴

Enter Lysander and Helena

Lys. Why should you think that I should⁵ woo
in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
125 In their nativity all truth appears.⁶
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge⁷ of faith, to prove them true?

¹ Lover's fee. Three kisses: a right rather than an honorarium.
² Fond pageant. Foolish show.
³ Sport alone. Unique or unequalled merriment.
⁴ Preposterously. Perversely, contrary to nature and reason.
⁵ Should. Ought to.
⁶ Vows so born... appears. When vows are so born, all truth appears in them at their birth.
⁷ Badge. Lysander's tears are the distinguishing marks of his sincerity.
Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.  

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!  

130 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.¹  

Lys. I had no judgement when to her I swore.  

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

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.  

Dem. [Awaking.] O Helen, goddess, nymph,  
perfect, divine!  

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?  
Crystall is muddy.² O, how ripe in show  

140 Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!  
That pure congealed white, high Taurus'³ snow,  
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss  
This princess of pure white,⁴ this seal of bliss!  

145 Hel. O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent  
To set against ⁵ me for your merriment:  
If you were civil and knew courtesy,⁶  
You would not do me thus much injury.⁷

¹ Tales. Idle words, pure fiction.  
² Crystal is muddy. Crystal is bright, but dull in comparison with the brightness of Helena's eyes.  
³ Taurus'. Taurus is a mountain range in Asia Minor. The snow of Taurus is as black as a crow in comparison with the whiteness of Helena's hand.  
⁴ Princess of pure white. Hand. Her hand would be a pledge, and a seal of his happiness.  
⁵ To set against. To attack.  
⁶ Knew courtesy. Had good manners.  
⁷ Injury. See II. i. 147.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
150 But you must join in souls ¹ to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,²
You would not use a gentle ³ lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,⁴
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
155 You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock ⁵ Helena:
A trim exploit,⁶ a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort ⁷
160 Would so offend a virgin and extort
A poor soul's patience,⁸ all to make you sport.

Lys. 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,
165 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.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none: ⁹
170 If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise ¹⁰ sojourn'd,

¹ Join in souls. Unite heartily.
² In show. In appearance.
³ Gentle. Well-born and tenderly nurtured.
⁴ Superpraise my parts. Overpraise my natural endowments.
⁵ To mock. In mocking.
⁶ Trim exploit. Pretty piece of work.
⁷ Sort. Rank.
⁸ Extort . . . patience. Wrest all her patience from her, and so make her impatient.
⁹ I will none. I do not want her.
¹⁰ Guest-wise. Just as a guest pays a visit at a person's
And now to Helen is it home return'd, 
There to remain.

Lys. Helen, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,

175 Lest, to thy peril, thou aby ¹ it dear. 
Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Re-enter Hermia

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function ² takes;
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense, 

180 It pays the hearing double recompense.³ 
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?

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

185 Her. What love could press Lysander from my side?

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide ⁴;

Fair Helena, who more engilds ⁵ the night
Then all yon fiery ⁶ oes ⁷ and eyes of light.

house and then goes home, so Demetrius' heart visited Hermia, 
but went home to Helena.

¹ Aby. Pay for.

² Function. Employment.

³ Wherein . . recompense. Night destroys the power of the eyes, makes the hearing doubly acute.

⁴ Bide. Stay.

⁵ Engilda. Makes bright.

⁶ Fiery oes. Circles of fire, orbs, stars.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
190 The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?
     Her. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.
     Hel. 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.²
195 Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
   Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
   To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
200 When we have chid the hasty-footed time
   For parting us, — O, is it all forgot?
   All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
   We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,⁵
   Have with our needles created both one flower,
205 Both on one sampler,⁶ 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.⁷ So we grew together,
   Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,

¹ This. Thy love for me makes thee follow me; my hatred for thee makes me flee from thee. This seems to point to Lysander's pursuit of Helena as proof that he loves Helena.
² To fashion me. To make this wicked sport to spite me.
³ Injurious. Insulting.
⁴ Contriv'd to bait. Plotted to worry.
⁵ Artificial gods. Gods whose creative power is shown in art, not in nature.
⁶ Sampler. Piece of canvas whereon samples, or specimens, were worked.
⁷ Incorporate. Incorporated, made one body.
⁸ Seeming. Seemingly.
210 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.

215 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.

220 Her. I am amazed at your passionate words. 
  I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me. 
  Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn, 
  To follow me and praise my eyes and face? 
  And made your other love, Demetrius, 

225 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, 

230 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,

---

1 An union in partition. United though parted.
2 Lovely. Loving.
3 Two of the . . . crest. Two of the first (bodies), like the double coats in heraldry. When two armorial ensigns are impaled in consequence of a marriage, the man's is on the right, the woman's on the left; and the husband's crest surmounts both. The dividing line between the ensigns is called the partition.
4 Rent. Rend.
5 Even but now. Only. Just now.
6 So in grace. So much in favour.
But miserable most, to love unlov'd?

235 This you should pity rather than despise.

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.

Hel. Ay, do, persevere, 1 counterfeit sad 2 looks,
Make mouths upon me 3 when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up: 4

240 This sport, well carried, 5 shall be chronicled. 6
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument. 7
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

245 Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Hel. O excellent!

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot entreat, 8 I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:

250 Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.

Helen, I love thee; by my life I do:
I swear by that 9 which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

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

255 Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, 10 and prove it too.

---

1 Persever. Pronounce per-sever.
2 Sad. Serious.
3 Make mouths upon me. Make ugly faces at me.
4 Hold the sweet jest up. Keep the delightful joke going.
5 Well carried. Well carried on, managed.
6 Chronicled. Put on record.
7 Argument. Subject of merriment.
8 Entreat. Prevail by entreaty.
9 That. My life.
10 Withdraw. Come away.
Dem. Quick, come!
Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?
Lys. Away, you Ethiopé!
Dem. No, no; he'll...

Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow,
But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!

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

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change
is this?

Sweet love,—

Lys. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Her. Do you not jest?

Hel. Yes, sooth; and so do you.

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

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

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

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

Her. 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.

---

1 *Ethiopé.* Hermia is a brunette.
2 *No, no.* Addressed to Lysander. No you don't! You
cannot fool me. You are only seeming to break loose.
3 *Tawny.* Of complexion like the colour of tan.
4 *A weak bond holds you.* Hermia’s arms around Lysander.
5 *A cat and a burr clinging.*
6 *What news?* What novelty is this?
7 *Erewhile.* A little while ago. It is still the same night.
Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me:
Why, then you left me — O, the gods forbid! —
In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. 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.

Her. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

Hel. 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!

Her. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urg'd her height;
And with her personage; her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.

---

1 Be out of. Be without.
2 Be certain, nothing truer. Be sure that nothing is truer.
3 Juggler. Pronounce jug'gel-er.
4 Canker-blossom. Three explanations are popular: a worm that preys upon blossoms — Helena has destroyed Lysander's love for Hermia; a blossom eaten by a canker-worm; the blossom of the dog-rose. The canker-worm works during the night.
5 Touch of. Not even in the least degree.
6 Compare. Comparison.
7 Urg'd. Boasted of.
8 Personage. Figure.
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.

_Hel._ I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,

_Lower!_ hark, again.

_Hel._ 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,
Told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,

_To Athens will I bear my folly back_

---

1 _Painted maypole._ A pole erected for the May-day dance.
_Maypole_ is a term of contempt applied to a tall woman. Cf.
_lamp-post._ The maypole was painted with variable colours.
_Painted_ likely refers to the clear pink and white of Helena's
blond complexion.

2 _Curst._ Ill-tempered.

3 _Right._ Downright, real.

4 _Something._ Somewhat.

5 _Evermore._ Always.

6 _Stealth._ Stealing away.

7 _So._ Provided that.
And follow you no further: let me go:
You see how simple ¹ and how fond ² I am.
Her. Why, get you gone: who is’t that hinders you?
Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.
320 Her. What, with Lysander?
Hel. With Demetrius.
Lys. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee,
    Helena.
Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.
Hel. O, when she’s angry, she is keen and shrewd ³!
She was a vixen ⁴ when she went to school;
325 And though she be but little, she is fierce.
Her. Little again! nothing but low and little!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.
Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus,⁵ of hindering knot-grass ⁶ made;
330 You bead, you acorn.⁷
Dem. 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 ⁸

¹ Simple. Silly.
² Fond. Foolishly loving.
³ Shrewd. Spiteful with the tongue.
⁴ Vixen. Ill-tempered, spiteful woman.
⁵ Minimus. Very little creature. A minim was the shortest note in music.
⁶ Hindering knot-grass. Knot-grass, a low-growing herb, was believed to have the power of hindering the growth of children.
⁷ You bead, you acorn. Both, like Hermia, are small and dark.
⁸ Intend. Pretend.
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

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

_Dem._ Follow! nay, I’ll go with thee, cheek by jowl.²

_[Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius._

_Her._ You, mistress, all this coil is ‘long of you:³

_Nay, go not back._

_Hel._ 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.

_Her._ I am amaz’d,⁴ and know not what to say. [Exit.

_Obe._ This is thy negligence: still thou mistak’st,
Or else committ’st thy knaveries wilfully.

_Puck._ 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.⁶

As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

_Obe._ Thou see’st these lovers seek a place to fight:

---

¹ _Aby._ Suffer for.
² _Cheek by jowl._ Cheek to jaw; _i.e._, side by side.
³ _Coil is ‘long of you._ Disturbance is owing to you.
⁴ _Curst._ Spiteful.
⁵ _Amaz’d._ Greatly confused.
⁶ _Still._ Always.
⁷ _Shadows._ Spirits.
⁸ _Sort._ Result.
⁹ _Jangling._ Quarrelling.
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.  

When they next awake, 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.

1 Hie. Hasten even to panting.  
2 Welkin. Sky.  
3 Acheron. A deep, black river in Hades. Pronounce Ak'e-ron.  
4 Wrong. Insult.  
5 Batty. Bat-like; i.e., black. Leadens suggests the heaviness, and black the darkness of sleep.  
6 Virtuous. Efficacious and beneficent.  
7 His. Its.  
8 Derision. Pronounce de-ri'si-on.  
9 Vision. Pronounce vi'si-on.  
10 Wend. Go slowly.  
12 Date. Duration.
Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night’s swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora’s harbinger;
At whose approach, ghosts, wand’ring here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: 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 aye consort with black-brow’d night.
Obe. 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.

1 Dragons. Because of their watchfulness, dragons were supposed to draw the chariot of night.
2 Aurora’s harbinger. Aurora is the goddess of the dawn. Her harbinger, or forerunner, is the morning star, called Venus or Phosphorus.
3 Damned spirits . . . burial. The spirits of criminals and of suicides were condemned to wander for a hundred years because the rites of sepulture had not been regularly bestowed on their bodies. Suicides and criminals were buried at crossroads so that their graves might be trampled upon by all. Floods refers to the water in which suicides were drowned.
4 Exile. Pronounce ex-ile’.
5 Morning’s love. Cephalus was the paramour of Aurora, and Tithonus was her husband. Tithonus and Oberon often went hunting together. Oberon means that he is not obliged to vanish at the dawn of day. He may have dallied with Aurora as Cephalus did, or have hunted with Tithonus or with Cephalus.
6 Salt green. Sea-green.
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 fear'd in field and town:
Goblin, lead them up and down.

_Here comes one._

_Re-enter Lysander_

_Lys._ Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

_Puck._ Here, villain; drawn¹ and ready. Where art thou?

_Lys._ I will be with thee straight.²

_Puck._ Follow me, then,
To plainer³ ground. [Exit Lysander, as following the voice.

_Re-enter Demetrius_

_Dem._ 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 defil'd

¹ _Drawn._ With sword drawn.
² _Straight._ Immediately.
³ _Plainer._ More level.
That draws a sword on thee.

Dem. Yea, art thou there?

Puck. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here. [Exeunt.

Re-enter Lysander

Lys. He goes before me and still dares me on: 1
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.

415 The villain is much lighter-heel'd 2 than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
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,

420 I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. 3 [Sleeps.

Re-enter Puck and Demetrius 4

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! 4 Coward, why com'st thou not?

Dem. Abide 5 me, if thou dar'st; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.

425 Where art thou now?

Puck. Come hither; I am here.

Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear, 7

---

1 Still dares me on. Always dares me to come on.
2 Lighter-heel'd. Swifter of foot.
3 Spite. Injury.
4 Ho, ho, ho! This is the traditional laugh that Puck inherited from the Devil of the old Moralities.
5 Abide. Wait for.
6 Wot. Know. 7 Buy this dear. Pay dearly for this.
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length\(^1\) on this cold bed.
\(430\) By day's approach look\(^2\) to be visited.

\[\text{[Lies down and sleeps.]}\]

\textit{Re-enter Helena}

\textit{Hel.} O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate\(^3\) thy hours! Shine comforts\(^4\) from the east,
That I may back\(^5\) to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest\(^6\):
\(435\) And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

\[\text{[Lies down and sleeps.]}\]

\textit{Puck.} Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst\(^7\) and sad:
\(440\) Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

\textit{Re-enter Hermia}

\textit{Her.} Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
I can no further crawl, no further go;

\(\begin{align*}
1 \textit{Measure out my length.} & \text{ Lie at full length.} \\
2 \textit{Look.} & \text{ Expect.} \\
3 \textit{Abate.} & \text{ Shorten.} \\
4 \textit{Shine comforts.} & \text{ May comforts shine.} \\
5 \textit{Back.} & \text{ Get back.} \\
6 \textit{Detest.} & \text{ Cry out against.} \\
7 \textit{Curst.} & \text{ Spiteful.}
\end{align*}\)
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.

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

[Squeezing the juice on Lysander’s eyes.
When thou wak’st,
Thou tak’st

True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady’s eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,

In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

[Exit.

1 Gentle. High-born and tenderly nurtured.

2 The man . . . well. A proverbial expression meaning that everything shall come right.
ACT IV

SCENE I. The same. Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia, lying asleep

Enter Titania and Bottom; Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, Mustardseed, and other Fairies attending; Oberon behind unseen

Tit. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable 1 cheeks do coy, 2
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bot. Where's Peaseblossom?
Peas. Ready.
Bot. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Mounsieur 3 Cobweb?
Cob. Ready.

Bot. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipp'd 4 humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good moun-

---

1 Amiable. Lovable because beautiful.
2 Coy. Caress to make Bot. quiet — probably, to keep him from talking.
3 Mounsieur. Perhaps, an unintentional Bottomese variation of meneieur; however, mounsieur is common in Elizabethan literature.
4 Red-hipp'd. The upper part of the leg of one species of humble, or bumble, bee is red.
sieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself
too much in the action, mounsieur; and, good mouns-
sieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would
be loath to have you overflown with a honey-bag,
signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed?

Mus. Ready.

Bot. Give me your neif, Mounsieur Mustardseed.

Pray you, leave your courtesy; good mounsieur.

Mus. What's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.

---

1 Honey-bag. The first stomach, wherein the bee stows its honey.

2 With. By.

3 Signior. An Italian title equivalent to Mr.

4 Neif. Fist, hand.

5 Leave your courtesy. Leave off bowing, put on your hat.

6 Cavalery. Bottom's pronunciation of the Spanish word cavallero, meaning cavalier, a mounted knight. Some editors think that Cobweb should be Peaseblossom, because Cobweb had been sent for a honey-bag; but could not Cobweb have returned and have begun to scratch? Or is Bottom perplexed in naming his new attendants?

7 Tender ass. Bottom does not know of his transformation.

8 I have . . . music. Bottom as a weaver was probably a singer of psalms.

9 Tongs. An iron instrument in the shape of tongs. It was struck by a key, or piece of iron, much as the triangle is to-day. Sometimes the tongs were clashed cymbal-like.

10 Bones. Bones were, and are, played between the fingers.
30  Tita. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.  
    Bot. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

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

40  Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.  

Fairies, be gone, and be always a way.  

[Exeunt Fairies.  

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
    Gently entwist;  
    Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.

45 O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! [They sleep.

---

1  Bottle of hay. Not a bundle of hay, but some measure of that provender; perhaps a quantity sufficient for one feed, and shaped bottle-like. Bottles were regulated by weight. It is recorded in a court book dated 1551 that the half-penny bottle of hay weighed two pounds and a half.

2  Fellow. Equal.

3  Exposition. Disposition.

4  Be always a way. Go away in all directions; disperse that danger may approach us from no direction; or, be always in the way — be ready at a call.

5  So doth ... entwist. The convolvulus winds about the honeysuckle; perhaps woodbine is here used for convolvulus. Because woodbine and honeysuckle are often used interchangeably, it has been suggested that Titania means she caresses Bottom just as the woodbine or honeysuckle entwines the trunk of a tree.

6  Female. Because she needs the support of the male elm. Enrings suggests the marriage ring.
Enter Puck

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

1 Favours. Gifts, perhaps, of flowers.
2 Rounded. Encircled.
3 Coronet. Little crown.
4 Orient. From the East; hence, sparkling.
5 Patience. Pronounce pā'ti-ence.
6 Other. Others.
7 May all. All may. 8 Fierce. Confused.
70 But first I will release the fairy queen.

[Touching her eyes.

Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see:
Dian’s bud 1 o’er Cupid’s flower 2
liath such force and blessed power.

75 Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

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

Obe. There lies your love.

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

80 Obe. Silence awhile. Robin, take off his head.

Tita, music call; and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense. 4

Tita. Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep!

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

85 Obe. Sound, music! [Still music. 4] Come, my
queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground 5 whereon these sleepers be.

---

1 Dian’s bud. The flower of the Agnus Castus, or Chaste
Tree. The bud has power to keep men and women chaste.
Queen Elizabeth liked to be called Diana, and Elizabeth’s
favourite flower was the rose; therefore, some call the rose
Dian’s bud.

2 Cupid’s flower. Cupid’s flower is heart’s-ease. Only the
little western heart’s-ease had magic power. See II. 1.
166.

3 Strike more . . . sense. Music was to strike the five—
Hermia, Helena, Lysander, Demetrius, and Bottom — into a
deeper sleep than ordinary.

4 Still music. Either soft music or the music does not begin
till Oberon adds his command to Titania’s.

5 Rock the ground. Cradle-like.
Now thou and I are now in amity. And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly
And bless it to all fair posterity:
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

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

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

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

[Exit._ Horns winded within.

_Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train_

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

[Exit an Attendant.

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1 _New in amity._ Have just made friends again.
2 _Solemnly._ With suitable ceremony.
3 _Sad._ Grave.
4 _Forester._ In Elizabethan literature, a hunter, not a wood-cutter.
5 _Observation._ Observance of May-day.
6 _Vaward._ Early, or forepart. Applied properly to an army; the vanward.
7 _Uncouple._ Set the hounds loose,
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top
110 And mark the musical confusion 1
Of hounds and echo in conjunction. 2

_Hip._ I was with Hercules 3 and Cadmus 4 once,
When in a wood of Crete 5 they bay'd 6 the bear 7
With hounds of Sparta: 8 never did I hear
115 Such gallant chiding 9; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, 10 every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

_The._ My hounds are bred out of the Spartan

120 So flew'd, 11 so sanded, 12 and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd and dew-lapp'd 13 like Thessalian 14
bulls;

---

1 _Conjunction._ Pronounce con-fju-ksh-in.
2 _Conjunction._ Pronounce con-junc-shin.
3 _Hercules._ See I. ii. 30.
4 _Cadmus._ A Phoenician king that came into Greece in
1493 B.C. He built Thebes, and introduced the alphabet.
5 _Crete._ Candia, in the Mediterranean, is still celebrated
for its dogs.
6 _Bay'd._ Brought to bay.
7 _Bear._ Should likely be boar.
8 _Sparta._ Spartan hounds were celebrated for swiftness
and quickness of scent.
9 _Chiding._ Barking harmoniously.
10 _Fountains._ A variant reading is mountains.
11 _Flew'd._ Flews are the large chaps of a deep-mouthed
hound.
12 _Sanded._ A sandy colour—a characteristic of a blood-
hound.
13 _Dew-lapp'd._ See II. i. 50.
14 _Thessalian._ Pertaining to Thessaly—the northern part
of Greece. Thessaly was famous for dogs and bulls.
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,¹
Each under each.² A cry³ more tuneable
125 Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge when you hear. But, soft! what nymphs⁴ are these?
Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep,
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:
I wonder of⁵ their being here together.
The. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,⁶
Came here in grace⁷ of our solemnity.
135 But speak, Egeus; is this not the day
That Hermia should give answer of⁸ her choice?
Ege. It is, my lord.
The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[Horns and shout within. Lys., Dem., Hel., and
Her. wake and start up.
Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine⁹ is past:
140 Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?
Lys. Pardon, my lord.

¹ Match'd in mouth like bells. A canine choir with graduated voices like a peal of bell.
² Each under each. One lower toned than the other.
³ Cry. Musical sound.
⁴ Nymphs. Maidens.
⁵ Of. At.
⁶ Hearing our intent. Hearing of our intention.
⁷ Grace. Honour.
⁸ Of. Concerning.
⁹ Saint Valentine. The 14th of February — the day on which birds are supposed to select their mates. Theseus lived long before St. Valentine.
The. I pray you all, stand up.

I know you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,¹

145 To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
'Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here;
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak,

150 And now do I bethink me, so it is,—
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of² the Athenian law—

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord; you have

155 I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
They would have stol'n away; they would, Demetrius,

Thereby to have defeated ³ you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

160 Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their

stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy ⁴ following me.
But, my good lord, I wot ⁵ not by what power,—

¹ So far from jealousy. So far from jealousy as.
² Without the peril of. Out of the danger threatened by.
³ Enough. You have enough evidence on which to convict him.
⁴ Defeated. Defrauded.
⁵ Fancy. Love.
⁶ Wot. Know.
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,
Melted as doth the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

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

[Exeunt The., Hip., Ege., and train.

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

1 Idle gaud. Useless toy. See I. i. 33.
2 Like in sickness. Like one in sickness.
3 As in health. Like one in health.
4 Anon. Immediately.
5 Overbear. Overrule.
6 By and by. Presently.
7 Knit. United.
8 For. Because.
Her. Methinks I see these things\(^1\) with parted eye,\(^2\) When every thing seems double.

**Hel.** So methinks:
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.\(^3\)

*Dem.* Are you sure that we're awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think

The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?

*Her.* Yea; and my father.
**Hel.** And Hippolyta.

*Lys.* And he did bid us follow to the temple.

*Dem.* Why, then, we are awake: let's follow him:

And by the way let us recount our dreams.

---

*Bot. ([Awaking.])* When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, "Most fair Pyramus.

Heigh-ho!" Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stol'n hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was — there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, — and methought I had, — but man is but a

\(^1\) These things. What has happened since the evening before.

\(^2\) Parted eye. If one's eyes were not in focus, the object would be seen separately by each eye.

\(^3\) Mine own, and not mine own. Just as a jewel does not belong to the person that finds it, but may be claimed by the owner.

\(^4\) Heigh-ho! Pronounce hi'ho to denote sadness, and hay'ho to denote gladness.
patch'd fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

SCENE II. Athens. QUINCE'S house

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOT, and STARVELING

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

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

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marr'd: it goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flu. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

1 Patch'd fool. A clown in the traditional parti-coloured garments.

2 Her. Thisbe's. Bottom may have thought of Titania as Thisbe.

3 Transported. Transformed.

4 It goes not forward. It will not be acted.

5 Discharge. Play the part of, act.

6 But he. Except him.

7 Wit. Understanding.
Snout. Yea, and the best person¹ too; and he is
a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say "paragon:"² a paramour is,
God bless us, a thing of naught.³

Enter Snug

Snug. Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.⁴

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scape sixpence a day: an the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hang'd; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus,⁶ or nothing.

Enter Bottom

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts⁷?

Quin. Bottom! O most courageous⁸ day! O most happy hour!

¹ Person. Figure.
² Paragon. Something surpassingly excellent.
³ A thing of naught. A naughty thing; i.e., a wicked thing.
⁴ We had all been made men. Our fortune would have been made.
⁵ Sixpence a day. A supposed hint to Elizabeth to be more liberal to the stage. Once, she bestowed £20 a year, about a shilling a day, upon an actor that pleased her. Sixpence a day would mean to us about a dollar a day.
⁶ In Pyramus. In the character of.
⁷ Hearts. Sweethearts, dear fellows.
⁸ Courageous. Gloriously encouraging.
Bot. Masters, I am \(^1\) to discourse wonders: but 30 ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.\(^2\)

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings\(^3\) to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps\(^4\); meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred.\(^5\) In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words:\(^6\) away! go, away! [Exeunt.

---

\(^1\) I am. I am ready.

\(^2\) Right as it fell out. Exactly as it happened.

\(^3\) Strings. To tie on the false beards.

\(^4\) Pumps. Shoes worn for pomp on special occasions.

\(^5\) Preferred. Presented to the authorities for approval. Bottom assumes that it will be accepted.

\(^6\) No more words. Bottom still likes to be the only talker.
ACT V

SCENE I. Athens. The palace of Theseus

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, Lords, and Attendants

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

The. More strange than true: I never may believe These antique fables, nor these fairy toys. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend More than cool reason ever comprehends. The lunatic, the lover and the poet Are of imagination all compact: One sees more devils than vast hell can hold, That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:

1 That. That which, what.
2 May. Can.
3 Antique. Pronounce an'tique. Here, odd.
4 Fairy toys. Fanciful tales.
5 Seething. Boiling to the point of burning.
6 Shaping fantasies. Creative imaginations.
7 Apprehend. Understand partially.
8 Comprehends. Understands fully.
9 All compact. Entirely composed.
10 All as. Quite as.
11 Helen's beauty. Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. She was a most beautiful woman, and a favourite Elizabethan type of beauty.
12 Brow of Egypt. Dark-complexioned face, gypsy-like. Gypsies were supposed to be Egyptians. Dark complexions were unfashionable because of blond Elizabeth.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear;
How easy 's a bush suppos'd a bear!

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Enter Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!
Lys. More than to us
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

1 Bodies forth. Gives a bodily shape to.
2 Airy nothing. A castle in the air.
3 Some fear. Cause of fear.
4 Easy. Easily.
5 Transfigur'd. Changed completely.
6 More witnesseth. Bears testimony that there is more.
7 Grows to . . . constancy. Holds together so consistently as to compel belief.
8 However. In any case.
9 Strange and admirable. Marvellous and to be wondered at.
The. Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper ¹ and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth ²?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

Phil. Here, mighty Theseus.

The. Say, what abridgement ³ have you for this evening?

Phil. What masque? what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy ⁴ time, if not with some delight?

The. [Reads.]

"The battle with the Centaurs," to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."

We'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman ⁵ Hercules.

¹ After-supper. Sometimes called the rere-supper, now the dessert.
² Manager of mirth. Master of the Revels.
³ Abridgement. Entertainment to make the time pass quickly.
⁴ Lazy. Slowly moving.
⁵ Brief. Short statement.
⁶ Ripe. Ready.
⁷ Centaurs. Race of beings belonging to T'essaly. A Centaur was half man, half horse. Hercules routed the Centaurs.
⁸ Kinsman. Hercules and Theseus were distant cousins. Notice Theseus' modesty.
"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,"
   Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."

50 That is an old device; and it was play'd
   When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
   Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary." 4

That is some satire, keen and critical, 5
55 Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
   And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth."

Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!
   That is, hot ice and wonderous strange snow.
60 How shall we find the concord of this discord?

1 Bacchanals. **Followers of Bacchus, the wine-god.**
2 Thracian singer. **Orpheus of Thrace. He was so grieved at the death of his wife, Eurydice, that he treated with contempt the women followers of Bacchus; and, in revenge, they tore him to pieces.**
3 Device. **Performance.**
4 The thrice three ... beggary. **Probably a reference to the death, in 1592, of Robert Greene, the dramatist. Greene was a Master of Arts of both Oxford and Cambridge, and died in extreme poverty. The nine Muses were the Greek goddesses that presided over the arts.**
5 Critical. **Censorious.**
6 Not sorting with. **Not suitable to.**
7 Wonderous strange. **Prodigious. Emendations have been made to accentuate the contradiction in hot ice. The most noteworthy are to substitute for wonderous strange scorching or strange black or seething or orange or sooty or swart or jet.**
8 Concord. **In music, every discord is followed by a concord.**
Phil. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
   Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
   Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
65 There is not one word apt, one player fitted:
   And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which, when I saw rehearse'd, I must confess,
   Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
70 The passion of loud laughter never shed.
The. What are they that do play it?
Phil. Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
   Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories
75 With this same play, against your nuptial.
The. And we will hear it.
Phil. No, my noble lord;
   It is not for you: I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
   Unless you can find sport in their intents,
80 Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,
To do you service.
   I will hear that play;
For never anything can be amiss,

1 Fitted. Suited to his part.
2 Passion. Emotion.
3 Unbreath'd. Unexercised.
4 Against. In preparation for.
5 It is not for you. It is not fit for you.
6 Intents. Endeavours, which they have strained to the utmost.
7 Conn'd. Strain'd.
8 Cruel. Excruciating.
When simpleness¹ and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

[Exit Philostrate.

35 Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd²
And duty in his service perishing.
The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hip. He says they can do nothing in this kind.³
The. The kinder⁴ we, to give them thanks for nothing.

90 Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks⁵ have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;

95 Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,

100 Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome;
And in the modesty of fearful⁶
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity

105 In least speak most, to my capacity.

¹ Simpleness. Single-heartedness. How consoling to find a person showing sympathy with honest failure — taking the will for the deed.
² O'ercharg'd. Loaded beyond what it can bear.
³ In this kind. Of this nature, in playing a drama.
⁴ Kinder. An intentional pun.
⁵ Clerks. Scholars.
⁶ Fearful. Full of fear, timid.
Re-enter Philostrate

Phil. So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.¹
The. Let him approach. [Flourish of trumpets.

Enter Quince for the Prologue

Pro. If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding ² to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.
The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.³
Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt;
he knows not the stop.⁴ A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.
Hip. Indeed he hath play'd on his prologue like a child on a recorder⁵; a sound, but not in government.⁶
The. His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

¹ Address'd. Ready.
² Minding. Intending.
³ Stand upon points. Mind the punctuation.
⁴ Stop. Stop means a punctuation mark and an obstacle in a horserace.
⁵ Recorder. Flute with a mouthpiece, a kind of flageolet.
⁶ In government. Under control.
Enter with a trumpet, and the Presenter before them, 
Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall, Moonshine, and 
Lion, in dumb show

Pre. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.  
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;  
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.
130 This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present 1  
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;  
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content  
To whisper.  At the which let no man wonder.  
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn, 
135 Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,  
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn 2  
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.  
This grisly 3 beast, which Lion hight 4 by name,  
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,  
140 Did scare away, or rather did affright;  
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall, 5  
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.  
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,  
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain.  
145 Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
He bravely broach'd 6 his boiling bloody breast;  
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
His dagger drew, and died.  For all the rest, 7

1 Present. Represent.  
2 Think no scorn. Do not disdain.  
3 Grisly. Terrible.  
4 Hight. Is called.  
5 Fall. Let fall.  
6 Broach'd. Stabbed. 7 For all the rest. As for all the rest.
Scene 1]  A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
150  At large discourse, while here they do remain.

[Exeunt Prologue, Thisbe, Lion, and Moon.

The. I wonder if the lion be to speak.
Dem. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when
many asses do.
Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
155  That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.

This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,¹
Through which the fearful² lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak
better?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard
discourse, my lord.

Enter Pyramus

The. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Pyr. O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so
black!

170  O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and
mine!

¹ Sinister. Pronounce sin-is'ter. ² Fearful. Timid.
175 Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
    Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!  [Wall holds up his fingers.
Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I?  No Thisby do I see.
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
180 Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!
   "Deceiving me" is Thisby's cue; she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Enter Thisbe

This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
    For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
190 Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.
   "Deceiving me" is Thisby's cue; she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Thisby!

This. My love thou art, my love I think.
   "Deceiving me" is Thisby's cue; she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

   And, like Limander, am I trusty still.
This. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

---

1 Sensible. Sentient, capable of feeling.
2 Pat. Exactly.
3 Limander. Leander, who used to swim nightly from Abydos across the Hellespont to Sestos to visit Hero, not Helen. One stormy night, he was drowned; consequently, Hero threw herself into the sea.
Pyr. Not Shafalus 1 to Procris was so true.
This. As Shafalus to Procris, I to you.
Pyr. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!
This. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.
Pyr. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?
This. 'Tide life, 'tide death, 2 I come without delay.

[Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.

Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. [Exit.
The. Now is the wall down between the two neighbours.

Dem. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning. 3

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.
The. The best in this kind are but shadows; and
the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them. 4

Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.
The. If we imagine no worse of them than they of
themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Enter Lion and Moonshine

Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear

1 Shafalus. Cephalus was beloved by Aurora, but remained true to his wife, Procris.
2 'Tide life, 'tide death. Whether life or death befall me.
3 To hear without warning. As to hear. Walls have ears. A wall between any neighbours would soon be thrown down if it were to exercise its power of hearing without giving warning.
4 The best . . . them. The best actors are but shadows of the reality; and the worst actors may be made equal to the best actors by the aid of the imagination.
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
220 When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion-fell,¹ nor else no lion’s dam ²;
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, ’twere pity on my life.³
225 The. A very gentle beast, and of a good con-
sience.
Dem. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e’er
I saw.
Lys. This lion is a very fox for his valour.
230 The. True; and a goose for his discretion.
Dem. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry
his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.
The. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his
valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well:
235 leave it to his discretion, and let us hearken to the
moon.
Moon. This lanthorn ⁴ doth the horned moon
present; —
Dem. He should have worn the horns on his head.
The. He is no crescent,⁵ and his horns are invisible
240 within the circumference.
Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon pre-
sent ⁶;
Myself the man i’ th’ moon do seem to be.

¹ Lion-fell. Lion's skin.
² Dam. Mother of a quadruped.
³ 'Twere . . . life. See III. i. 43.
⁴ Lanthorn. See III. i. 59.
⁵ Crescent. Shaped, or new, moon.
⁶ Present. Represent.
The. This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i' th' moon?

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff?

Hip. I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

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

Lys. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.

Dem. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for they are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe.

Enter Thisbe

This. This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

Lion. [Roaring.] Oh — [Thisbe runs off.

Dem. Well roar'd, Lion.

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

[The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.

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1 Greatest. Greater than all the rest of the errors.

2 In snuff. Candles were said to be in snuff when the charred wick deadened the light. In snuff meant, also, in hasty anger.

3 In the wane. Coming to the end of the speech.
The. Well mous'd,¹ Lion.
Lys. And so the lion vanish'd.
Dem. And then came Pyramus.

Enter Pyramus

270 Pyr. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.
But stay, O spite!

275 But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole² is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!

280 Thy mantle good,
What, stain'd with blood!
Approach, ye Furies³ fell⁴!
O Fates⁵ come, come,
Cut thread and thrum⁶;

285 Quail,⁷ crush, conclude, and quell⁸!

¹ Mous'd. Treated as a mouse is by a cat; i.e., well shaken and torn.
² Dole. Grief.
³ Furies. Three goddesses that executed the vengeance of the gods.
⁴ Fell. Very cruel.
⁵ Fates. Three goddesses that controlled man's destiny. The youngest, Clotho, presided at his birth, and held a distaff; Lachesis spun from the distaff all the events of his life; and the eldest, Atropos, cut the thread when the web was complete — his life ended.
⁶ Thrum. The thrum is the small tuft at the end of the thread where the thread is fastened to the loom. If the thread and thrum are cut, the web is freed.
⁷ Quail. Kill.
⁸ Quell. Murder.
The. This passion and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?

Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear: Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer.

Come, tears, confound; Out, sword, and wound

The pap of Pyramus; Ay, that left pap, Where heart doth hop: [Stabs himself. Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. Now am I dead, Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky: Tongue, lose thy light; Moon, take thy flight: [Exit Moonshine. Now die, die, die, die, die. [Dies.

Dem. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than an ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.

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1. Passion. Violent grief. A humorous way of saying, "This passion by itself does not move. It is necessary to add the death of a dear friend."

2. Beshrew my heart. An exclamation: Evil befall my heart.

3. With cheer. With pleasant face.


5. Pap. The word was pronounced pop. It means breast.

6. Die. Die is the singular of dice.

7. Ace. Ace and ass were homonyms.
The. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance\(^1\) Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

The. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion\(^2\) ends the play.

Re-enter Thisbe

315 Hip. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Dem. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better\(^3\); he for a man, God warrant\(^4\) us; she for a woman, God bless us.

320 Lys. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Dem. And thus she moans,\(^5\) videlicet:—

This.  Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?

325 O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,

330 These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone:
Lovers, make moan:

---

\(^1\) How chance. How does it chance?
\(^2\) Passion. Violent grief.
\(^3\) Which Pyramus . . . better. Which is the better, Pyramus or Thisbe.
\(^4\) Warrant. Defend.
\(^5\) Moans. Says in sighs.
His eyes were green\(^1\) as leeks.

O Sisters Three,\(^2\)
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore\(^3\)

With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue\(^4\):

[Stabs herself.]

And, farewell, friends;

Thus, Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu. \([Dies.\)]

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. \([Starting\ up.\] No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers.\(^5\) Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask\(^6\) dance between two of our company?

The. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had play'd Pyramus and hung himself

\(^1\) Green. Green eyes were considered beautiful, but green is now called blue.

\(^2\) Sisters Three. The Fates.

\(^3\) Shore. Shorn.

\(^4\) Imbrue. Stain with blood.

\(^5\) The wall is . . . fathers. A proverb that means the cause of difference is removed.

\(^6\) Bergomask. A country dance after the manner of the clownish people of Bergamo, a town in Lombardy.
in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very notably discharged.¹

But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone.

[A dance.

The iron tongue of midnight hath told ² twelve: Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.³

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn As much as we this night have overwatch'd.⁴

This palpable-gross ⁵ play hath well beguil'd The heavy gait ⁶ of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity, In nightly revels and new jollity.⁷ [Exeunt.

Enter Puck

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,

And the wolf behowls ⁸ the moon;

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,

All ⁹ with weary task fordone.¹⁰

Now the wasted brands ¹¹ do glow,

Whilst the screech-owl,¹² screeching loud,

¹ Discharged. Performed, acted.
² Told. Counted.
³ Fairy time. Midnight.
⁴ Overwatch'd. Passed in wakefulness.
⁵ Palpable-gross. So clumsy that every one must perceive its grossness.
⁶ Heavy gait. Slow pace.
⁷ A fortnight . . . jollity. Keep up these revels for a fortnight.
⁸ Behowls. Howls at.
⁹ All. Utterly.
¹⁰ Fordone. Exhausted, quite done out.
¹¹ Wasted brands. Fires or torches that have burnt low.
¹² Screech-owl. The sound of the screech-owl was supposed to be a death omen.
375 Puts the wretch that lies in wo
   In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
   That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
380 In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
   By the triple ¹ Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
   Following darkness like a dream,
385 Now are frolic ²: not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
I am sent with broom before,
   To sweep the dust behind the door.³

Enter Oberon and Titania, with their train

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

Tita. First, rehearse your song by rote,
395 To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place.

[Song and dance.

¹ Triple. Luna, Cynthia, or Phœbe in heaven; Diana on earth; Hecate or Proserpine in Hades. Luna drove round the sky in a chariot.
² Frolic. Very merry.
³ To sweep... door. Puck helped good girls with the housework. It was an untidy Elizabethan custom to sweep the dust behind the door. It has been suggested that Puck swept the dust from behind the door.
Obe. Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.

So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in 'heir issue stand;
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.

With 'this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait;

And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace;
And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away; make no stay;
Meet me all by break of day.

[Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.]

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.

And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon, will we mend:

1 Prodigious. Unnatural.  2 Several. Separate.
2 Consecrate. Consecrated.  4 Shadows. Spirits, actors
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,¹
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.

Give me your hands,² if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.³  

¹ Serpent's tongue. Hisses.
² Give me your hands. Applaud.
³ Restore amends. Return your favours.